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REV. ARTHUR HANCOCK



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THE SACRIFICIAL LIFE
AND OTHER SERMONS AND ADDRESSES



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THE SACRIFICIAL LIFE

AND

OTHER SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

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BY

REV. ARTHUR HANCOCK

DELIVERED DURING THE YEAR OF HIS PRESIDENCY
OF THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN (METHODIST)
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To
THE DEAR MEMORY
OF MY
SAINTED MOTHER
AND SON

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THE SACRIFICIAL LIFE

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.”—JOHN xii. 24.

JESUS had entered Jerusalem for the last time. In a few short days the sacrifice of His love would reach its consummation on the Cross. He was entering the deepest depth, the darkest hour, of His great passion, and of all the people, none was with Him. Even His disciples, as John sorrowfully acknowledges, understood not the significance of the events that were transpiring. Only when Jesus was glorified and the promised Spirit of truth imparted did they see the Redeeming purpose that lay in an unbroken line from the manger of Bethlehem to the Cross of Calvary.

And true is it for ever that Spiritual Knowledge can only come by spiritual revelation and vision. “No man can say that Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit.”

Among the crowds that thronged Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, which Jesus had come to observe with His disciples, was a company of Greeks who came sincerely desiring to see Jesus. They made known their request to Philip, and he, in company with Andrew, whose counsel he had sought, introduced these inquiring souls into

the Master's presence. It is not probable that the Apostles saw anything extraordinary in this event, but the soul of Jesus was profoundly moved. In that wistful quest, "Sir, we would see Jesus," he heard the first faint articulate sigh of the ages; he felt the throb and heartbeat of a world of souls. He beheld in these eager, expectant faces the first fruits of the gathering of the people unto Himself, the earnest of His future triumphs among the great heathen nations, the beginning of that process of salvation which has continued until now, and shall continue until all His plans are realised, all His people saved, and all His foes made His footstool. Then, as He remembered what lay between, the price that must be paid, "Jesus answereth them saying, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.'" And truly the hour was come, the hour to which all earlier hours had led, when the Son of Man should be glorified; glorified by the revelation of Divine love upon the Cross,—that Cross that alone now stood between Him and His many crowns. And all was present to His omniscient eye, the immediate suffering, the prospective glory; nor was there any other way to the glory but through the shadowed valley of suffering. Between Him and the throne of conquest lay the Cross with its anguish and shame. The arrival of these seekers from another nation was the final forecast of its uplifting. Just as at the beginning the Magi had come to worship at His cradle, so now these Greeks were come at the end to worship at His Cross. And this was now His

only thought. He had room in His heart for no other.

His next words given are, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.”

As the grain of wheat must die, if it is to bear fruit, so Christ, the seed-corn of redeemed humanity, must die if that redemption is to be secured. He can only be the Saviour of men by the sacrifice of Himself.

This law of vicarious sacrifice which Jesus thus so clearly applies to Himself is immediately set forth as central and supreme in the Spiritual Kingdom. “He that loveth his life loseth it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” The disciple must be as his Master. “As He is, so are we in this world.” Those who would be His followers must conform to the same law of life, and be prepared to follow Him even unto death. “If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.” Let him join the Cross-bearing procession of the Cross-bearing Lamb of God. And what of the final recompense and issue ? “Where I am there shall also my servant be ; if any man serve Me, him will the Father honour.” Yes ; this law of life has not only its suffering side, but its glory side. The faithful disciple following his Master may often find the path steep and rugged ; it may lie through pain and peril, toil and tribulation, but it leads to the mansions of glory. Thither the Forerunner has already entered, the crown of thorns exchanged for the

crown of glory, and those who share his reproach on earth shall share His everlasting honours there.

I wish now to take this utterance of Christ as expressive of the one thought that the law of vicarious sacrifice is the fundamental law of the spiritual life.

The word "vicarious" means "in the stead of"; and by vicarious sacrifice we understand "that suffering which is endured in another's stead and not as the sufferer's own desert." In this, as in other aspects, the kingdoms of nature and of grace are governed by the same law. The illustration used by Jesus is from the kingdom of nature. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." The seed-corn of one year must perish if the harvest of the next year is to be reaped. There is no life, no fruit, without dying. Take the single wheat grain. Within it is the promise and potency of a hundred-fold increase. But for that increase to be realised its own life must be surrendered. Could it speak, I imagine it saying, Is there no other way? Must I go down into the cold earth and lie there the winter months through, and decay and perish? And the answer is, There is no other way. Through death to life is the Divine order. The same principle is always and everywhere at work. It is in the constitution of universal nature. The universe is built upon it. Robertson has said, "The mountain rock must have its surface rusted into putrescence and become dead soil before the herb can grow. The destruction of

the mineral is the life of the vegetable. Out of the soil in which fallen leaves are buried the young tree shoots vigorously and strikes its roots deep down into the realm of decay and death. Upon the life of the vegetable world the myriad forms of higher life sustain themselves ; still the same law—the sacrifice of life to give life.” In the animal world you see the same process at work in the birds that find their food in insect form, and the leviathans of the ocean that prey upon the smaller species. The innocent lives of animals are sacrificed for the food of man ; and deeper still, back into the very roots of being the same law applies. What is a mother’s life in her descent into the valley of the shadow of death, in her ceaseless vigil, but a sacrifice to the child she bears ; and what are the privileges and liberties of our religious life to-day but the fruit of the tears and blood of those who have gone before us ? They sowed the seed often amid unfriendly watches and at peril of their own lives, of the harvest that waves in golden ripeness now. “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

Now in the highest and noblest form in which it is possible to conceive of it, this law applies to Jesus Christ. His life from beginning to end, from cradle to Cross, was sacrifice, vicarious sacrifice. For us He lived, for us He died. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.” The entire Biblical conception of Christ is sacrificial. The favourite figure employed both by Old and New Testa-

ment writers is "The Lamb." The first name by which John, the beloved Apostle, knew Jesus was the Lamb; and in his final vision when he was permitted to gaze into the innermost sanctities of heaven, He is still the Lamb, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." The central truth of Paul's teaching is, "He was made a sin-offering for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"; and Peter's Gospel is summed up in the words, "His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed."

That which gives depth, keenness, poignancy to the sacrifice of Christ beyond all others is that it was a sacrifice for sin; sin, not His own, but the world's sin. Himself, without sin, without spot or blemish, He stood in the sinner's stead and bore the sinner's punishment. "His soul was made an offering for sin." "By the Grace of God, He tasted death for every man." He had tasted hunger and thirst, weariness and want, but this bitterest thing remained; He must taste death. That He should become flesh was necessary, but only as preparatory to the atoning sacrifice of His death. His precious blood-shedding is the atonement itself. We have the clear assurance from His own lips that if He had not died He would have remained by Himself alone. It was through dying that He would become the source of life and salvation to all who should believe in His name. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all

men unto Myself." This He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die, and signifying, too, what the wondrous issues of that death should be. My brethren, the one redeeming force in this world to-day is the magnetism of the Cross, the infinite Love that gave itself to death for the life of men. It is from the elevation of the Cross that the Redeemer's voice is heard : "Look unto Me and be ye saved." As we look we are saved, the power of sin is broken, the dark night melts into the light of day.

"Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove,
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His dying love."

The atonement has its profound mysteries that are dark with excess of light, and may well furnish a theme for eternal contemplation and research, but in its simplest essence it is not beyond the grasp even of "a little child." Joseph Cook, in his "Lectures on the Atonement," relates an instance of an American teacher named Bronson Alcott, who in dealing with a refractory lad, after trying many methods of punishment without success, at length resorted to this expedient. Another offence having been committed, the teacher called up the lad and said to him, "I have determined to bear your punishment this time, and you shall administer it." He handed the cane to the boy, and holding out his right hand, told the boy to give him six stripes. But at the very first attempt, the boy broke down, and burst into tears. From

that moment it was as if a new set of shuttles began to weave in his nature. The sight of his master standing in his stead and willing to suffer for him effected his complete moral reformation. A shadow it may be, and only a shadow, but it is the Shadow of the Cross, and it is not far to pass from it to the words of the Evangelical Prophet: "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

The vicarious sacrifice of Christ was also voluntary. His own words are, "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." It is its voluntariness that makes His offered life a sacrifice. Had He been dragged reluctantly to His doom, He might have been an object of our pity and compassion, but not of that adoring love and wonder with which we now regard Him. What was it that bound Him to the Cross? Was it the nails that pierced His quivering flesh? Nay! It was "love divine, all loves excelling." He went with steady step of His own set purpose to the high altar. He laid down His life because He would lay it down. Neither His friends could dissuade nor His foes compel, when once He had "set His face" towards the hill of sacrifice.

What does this sacrifice reveal to us of God? Its clearest, brightest revelation is that "God is Love." Jesus by His dying did not make God love us. His death is the ocean channel through which that love finds outflow and expression.

In dying for us He has shown how much God can love, how low God can stoop, how mightily God can redeem.

What does this sacrifice mean to us ? It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It is to the weary, rest ; to the guilty, pardon ; to the polluted, cleansing ; to the dead, life, eternal life.

And the highest form of salvation possible to us is life, life in Christ, life with Christ ; life for Christ, expressing itself in all the beauty and dignity of holy character and in all the gracious activities of loving service.

I want, in closing words, to examine the law of vicarious sacrifice in relation to our own Christian Life, for, by virtue of our union with Christ, we come under the dominion of the same law of life. He spake it not only to Himself, but to all who would be His disciples. "He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Do we call Him "Saviour" ? We cannot stop there. We must go on to call Him "Master and Lord." Nor should we do it grudgingly and of necessity, but joyfully and of love's constraint. Henceforth, then, we enter a higher order of life. We are no longer our own. We are His who, for our sakes, died and rose again. We do not need to stand with Him in the place of atonement for sin. As the sin-bearing Lamb of God, He has no sharers or compeers. He is "the Alpha and the Omega." But to share the fellowship of His sufferings, to receive and exemplify this spirit of sacrificial

love—that is our high privilege and obligation. The soul's identification with Christ is nowhere set forth so clearly as in the experience and writings of St Paul. It is he who uses the great words that we tremble to utter after him, "I am crucified with Christ." "I rejoice in my sufferings . . . and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the affliction of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake which is the Church." And next to Paul, the greatest names in Christian history are the names of those—missionaries like himself—who have gone forth at the call of Christ and for His sake, counting not their lives dear unto them, surrendering all to His kingly claim, that they might seek and save the lost souls of men. Livingstone dying on his knees in his little hut in Africa ; Williams clubbed to death on the shores of Erromanga, and Chalmers suffering similar martyrdom at a recent date in New Guinea ; the Combers lying side by side where the Congo River rolls its wide waters ; our own beloved Thorne and Carter and Vanstone, who gave their lives for the salvation of China ; these are but a few among numberless instances of the preciousness and power of the sacrificial life. And shall these lands be won for Christ ? Yes, for the seed-grain has been sown, and the soil moistened with tears and blood, from which shall yet be gathered the regenerated races of mankind.

Such sacrificial lives are immortal. They are woven with Christ's into the history of the world's redemption, and when the final struggle is over they that have suffered with Him shall

reign with Him on heavenly thrones. Are we ready for the full and glad surrender? The choice is ours between the life which, intent only on its own selfish pleasure, ends by losing itself; or the life which, given up to do Christ's perfect Will, shall find itself again enriched, ennobled and glorified for evermore.

“O let me speak the thoughts of Christ
And then my words shall glow
In hearts when I am gone.
To beautify and bless shall they appear;
Harvests out of them shall grow
To bless the millions yet to be.”

THE SPRING-TIME OF THE SOUL

“Thou renewest the face of the earth.”—PSALM civ. 30.

“The year’s at the spring,
The hill-side’s dew-pearled ;
God’s in His heaven,
All’s right with the world.”

WE have just entered upon the month which ushers in the spring-time of the year. The word April comes from the Latin *aperio*, “I open.” The name has a beautiful significance and appropriateness. During the winter months the earth has been shut up, congealed by cold winds and frosts. We have seen the apparent reign of death in leafless trees and barren fields. Now we see the beginnings and unfoldings of the reign of life, and it is all summed up in this *aperio*. The earth is opening her bosom for the reception of seed and bulb and plant, and on every tree there is an opening of bud and blossom in lovely varieties of shape and shade. Nothing escapes the touch and throb of the new life of spring.

“In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin’s breast ;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest.”

The eye must be dull indeed that does not see the beauty of the opening spring, and the

heart in melancholy unresponsiveness that does not rejoice with an awakening creation.

With an easy and swift transition our thoughts are carried forward to the Spring-time of the Soul; the awakening of the spiritual nature to the beauty and blessedness of its risen life in Christ. From December to April is the outward parable of the spiritual change "from death unto life" in which every true believer rejoices; and full of beauty and wonder as the natural order is, the spiritual order is more beautiful and wonderful still. It is not only resurrection; it is regeneration, re-creation. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old things are passed away, behold they are become new." With the new life, new graces, new gifts, new dispositions, new hopes are born; and with them all the beauties of holiness and the clustered fruit of the Spirit.

What makes the natural spring? Simply the old earth turning her face to the sun, the great source of light and heat; and it is the touch of that light and heat that opens the million pores of nature and calls forth its latent energy.

Has it been winter-time with us in the soul? Have we been cold, inert, joyless, beautyless, fruitless, lifeless? It is because we have turned our backs upon God. We have followed "afar off." We have drifted into distance and separation from God. As true to-day as ever is the prophet's charge: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear."

Separation from God ! that is the source of the wintry heart. That is the arctic zone where all is chilly barrenness ; and the admonition is for all. Any cherished or known sin in the heart of a believer as truly estranges from God as in the hearts of those who have never believed. It neutralises prayer, paralyses effort, destroys usefulness, and despoils moral beauty.

The spiritual spring, the blessed Easter-tide, will only come as we once more turn our faces to God, the “Sun of our Soul” ; as we draw near in willingness for cleansing from “the last remains of sin,” as we dwell in the burning brightness of His glorious Presence. Then shall our whole being *open* to receive the “fulness of the blessing of Christ,” the beauty and the fruitfulness of which will soon appear.

Let us ponder one or two “openings” that make the Spiritual Spring.

THE OPEN HEART.

Christ pleads for this as the condition of spiritual fellowship : “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me . . . for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” “Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice and will open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me.” We rejoice to-day in an open Bible, an open press, and open sanctuaries ; but our plea is for an open heart. “Throw the heart’s door widely open, bid Him enter while you may.” Is your

own hand too weak or unwilling to turn the handle from the inside? Ask Him to turn it from the outside. Paul rejoiced over Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened." Look up into His face, and pray for

"A heart in every thought renewed
And full of love Divine,
Perfect and right and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine."

Many systems of human reform work from without to within, and some, I fear, have not got any *within*, but the Kingdom of Christ works from within to without. Let my open heart be "my great Redeemer's throne," and He will work from that centre until every thought is brought into subjection to His will, and every province of my life made captive to His sway. Then shall it be spring-time "within" and "without."

THE OPEN EYE.

Thus the Psalmist prayed : "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." The wonders of the natural world are only observable by the physical eye. So the wonders of the spiritual world are only perceptible to the eye of faith. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." Worldly men deny their existence ; but the testimony of all believers is, "*We know.*" Open vision follows the open heart. The Bible is a sealed book without spiritual vision, and God unseen but by the pure in heart. What seest thou? The

answer will indicate where you are in the Christian life. It is a question of seeing less or more. The Israelites saw only the bitter waters of Marah's pool: Moses beheld the tree that made those waters sweet. The ten spies saw only the great walls and the giant sons of Anak: Joshua and Caleb, their companions who "wholly followed the Lord," saw more, they saw God. And in the confidence born of the vision, Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it."

That is the language of victorious faith to-day; but there must be the open eye to see.

Elisha's servant saw only the invading army of the King of Syria at Dothan, until at the prayer of the prophet, the Lord opened the eyes of the young man. Then he shared his master's fearless calm, for "he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

The natural world in the wealth of spring is fair to see; but more full of glories still are the spread-out treasures of Emmanuel's land. And that land is not a distant prospect, but an immediate possession. He that hath eyes to see shall see.

THE OPEN LIP.

Another prayer of the Psalmist is: "O Lord, open Thou my lips and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise."

No sooner does the spring-time come than all

nature becomes vocal with the praises of God, and this again is but a parable of the spiritual spring. When our hearts are open to the incoming of the love of God, and our eyes to behold His glory, our lips as naturally become unsealed and our mouth speaks His praise. The Apostles, fresh from the baptism of the Holy Ghost, were charged not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, but their irresistible reply was, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." A full heart means open lips. Experience must find expression. If experience meetings are *going out*, it is because experience has *gone out*.

Wanted! *open lips*; testifiers for Jesus, witnesses of the Cross! anywhere, in the home or the street, the workshop or the sanctuary. We shall have them as the Spirit of Life and Power is received by the opened hearts of believers. Then shall our sons and our daughters prophesy and our young men see visions.

Billy Bray's well-known words were: "I could no more help speaking about Christ than the sun can help shining or the birds help singing. Some said they had hard work to get away from their companions, but I had hard work to find mine soon enough to tell them what the Lord had done for my soul." And he always remembered that "his own candle never burnt any the less brightly for every other candle that was lit from it." Oh for more of Billy Bray's open-hearted, open-eyed, and open-lipped religion! Every such soul

carries with him the very breath of Spring. When they are sufficiently multiplied, the Song of the Canticles shall be the song of the whole Church of Christ on earth : “For lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come . . . the fig tree putteth forth his green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a goodly smell.”

THE OPEN HAND.

The command of Moses was, “Thou shalt open thine hand wide,” and Jesus said, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” An open heart will mean an open hand. If we have truly apprehended the significance of Christ’s Cross, we cannot henceforth live unto ourselves. And as the great gift of full salvation in Him is realised, it inspires both the giving and the forgiving spirit. To live miserly is to live miserably. God is always blessed, always happy, because He is always giving. What a vacuum our lives would be, but for the streams of blessing ever flowing into them from the fountain of His beneficence !

Is there not much room in the Christian Church for the lesson of the open hand ? If there was a true appreciation of the joy of Christian giving, much energy that is now wasted would be spared, and the Kingdom of Christ would be hastened.

All these things help to make the blessedness

of the Spring-time of the Soul ; a Spring-time which need never lapse into Winter ; and, if it pass away at all, shall only pass into the fuller splendours of the Summer and the ripened fruitage of Autumnal Years.

NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS!

A TEMPERANCE SUNDAY MESSAGE

“Everyone over against his house.”—NEHEMIAH iii. 28.

WE are not only Christians, but Christian citizens; not only members of the Church of Christ, but members of a nation; and the subject of our thought and prayer to-day should be, not only that individual righteousness to which we are all called in Christ, but the righteousness of the nation to which we belong.

This is, we are sure, in harmony with the mind and will of God. It is written: “The righteous God loveth righteousness.” “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in.” “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, before Him shall be gathered all nations.” There is to be a national, as well as an individual judgment.

Anticipating that solemn scrutiny, I propose to consider our National Life, and how it is to be conformed to the high requirements of God.

I will use an Old Testament incident as a sort of historical setting.

Nehemiah was a distinguished Jewish patriot

who lived in the Court of the Persian King in a position of dignity and ease. But he hears the story of Jerusalem's ruin, and every kindly instinct of his nature is touched. For days and weeks, while fasting and praying, he seeks to know the will of God. At length his mind is made up. He cannot any longer live a life of selfish indulgence while his brethren are in affliction. Obtaining the King's permission, he leaves the royal court for Jerusalem, the city of his father's sepulchres. Now, what was his first duty? Clearly to see for himself its condition and need. Beneath the silent stars, no one with him but the beast on which he rode, he went forth on his midnight excursion. Ruin and desolation everywhere confronted him. The wall was broken down, and the gates burned with fire; the people sad and defenceless. But he was not disheartened, for the hand of God was upon him. In the morning a council was called, and, inspired by Nehemiah's presence and courage, they resolved to "arise and build."

Now see how the work was done. Not by one or two, or a hundred, or a thousand, but by *all the people*. Men and women of all ranks and conditions joined in the welcome task. There is only one suggestive exception—"The nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." No! their necks were soft and unused to the yoke of toil. The titled aristocracy of that time were content, as too many of their successors are to-day, to reap the harvest of the toil and industry of others, without contributing

aught themselves to the good of the commonwealth. It would be a righteous thing to enforce the Apostolic command that "if any would not work, neither should he eat."

But as for the others of that far-back day, merchants and mechanics, goldsmiths and apothecaries, priests and people, "all seized trowel or spade and wheeled or piled. One put up a long length of wall, another a shorter one, as he was able. Others repaired the locks, bolts, and bars for the gates." And this is the principle upon which they worked : "Every one over against his house." The principle is as beautiful as it is natural, for every one would work with all the greater zeal when he saw his own homestead mutely appealing for defence, and thought of the loved ones there.

So the work was done, roughly and hurriedly. The result would not compare with the beauty of Solomon's Temple, or the finished architecture of the present, but it was sufficient to afford safety and protection. Safe without, afterwards came the work of social and moral reconstruction within.

Christian brethren, we are confronted to-day with great national problems—social, political, spiritual — all crying for solution, and this historical incident furnishes me with the text for some words that have need to be said in relation to them, and especially upon the personal responsibility of Christian men and women.

"Every one over against his house," is a principle which, if acted upon, will go a long

way to repair the ruins that exist around us now. And let me say :

THERE ARE RUINS TO BE REPAIRED.

Ruins ! yes, National Ruins. If I speak of the dark side, it is not that I do not know there is a bright side.

Thank God there is a bright side. There is much among us that is noble and true, patriotic, philanthropic, and Christian. The Church of Christ is here, its heart beating loyally to its great Head, its arms outstretched to gather to itself the weary and the heavy-laden, its feet speeding on swift errands of mercy. The Kingdom of Christ is here ; wide, world-embracing, shining as God's own light in the midst of darkness, penetrating and spreading like fire in the midst of stubble. Its presence is apparent in "every virtue we possess and every victory won."

The Christian philanthropies of England are her glory. Our hospitals, orphanages, and all benevolent institutions are the direct fruit of Christianity. If there was never so much evil ; there was never so much good. The forces that accentuate the one, accentuate the other.

But there is a dark and tragic side. Take London alone. The great million-peopled city ! The head and heart, not of one nation only, but of a world of nations. The centre of the world's commercial, intellectual, and religious life. Yet, how appallingly great its sin ! The city's sin and sorrow can only be known to Him

whose tear-stained face, as He looked upon Jerusalem, betokened a perception and a sympathy that none other knew or shared.

A terrible picture of "Life in West London" has been disclosed in Mr Arthur Sherwell's book bearing this title. Social and spiritual destitution exist in the West equally with the East End, and the conditions in which the people live are such as to make righteousness of life practically impossible. What is true of London is true of many, if not most of the large towns and cities of our land. Of this many are wilfully ignorant. Wrapped in the ermine of a soft indulgence, they know not, nor care to know. Like the priest and the Levite (most hideous thing in the New Testament) they pass by on the other side. Others have got so used to it that it fails to make much impression on them, and the vices of society are come to be regarded as "being inseparable from our modern life, like the noise of a carriage wheel from its rotation." But is it so? Must it be so?

Dr Maclaren, in one of his published sermons, puts the following pertinent questions:—"Is it indeed inevitable that within a stone's throw of our churches and chapels there should be thousands of men and women that have never been inside a place of worship since they were christened; and have no more religion than a horse? Must it be that the shining structure of our modern society, like an old Mexican temple, must be built upon a layer of living men flung in for a foundation! Can it not be helped that there should be streets in Manchester

into which it is unfit for a decent woman to go by day alone, and unsafe for a brave man to venture after nightfall? Must men and women huddle together in dens where decency is as impossible as it is for swine in a sty? Is it an indispensable part of our material progress and wonderful civilisation that vice and crime and utter irreligion and hopeless squalor should go along with it."

If it be so, then we join with him in the answer that "our progress is a delusion, and that the simple life of agricultural communities is far better than this unwholesome aggregation of men."

It is part of our duty to enquire into the causes of these things.

THE CAUSE OF THESE NATIONAL RUINS.

If there are these national ruins to restore, how are they conditioned? What is the explanation? Is there not a cause? It is apparent to every thoughtful mind that there are three great contributory causes, and they are known by the ugly names of Greed, Lust and Drink. There are other forms of sin I know, all springing from the parent sin of separation from God, but these are among the most malignant and destructive. There is the greed that builds up fortunes and cares not how, that exacts rents from houses unfit for human habitation, and grinds and sweats the poor.

The *Standard*, in its review of Mr Sherwell's

book, said:—"There is a heavy indictment against exacting landlords and unscrupulous tradesmen, the latter being in league with unprincipled sweepers. Hard work and wretched pay fall to the lot of a large proportion of those who help to make the fortunes of their employers. If the work were more continuous, and the pay more generally in proportion to the service rendered, while rents were moderate, the people might prosper. In the absence of these things, there is much that is utterly deplorable."

National righteousness demands that no man shall exact more than his due. The spirit of greed also fosters the evil of gambling, which is eating like a cancer into the national heart, by which many are reduced to poverty, shame and death. Gambling is now not only the fashionable occupation of the wealthy, but it is the curse of the man in the street, of the butcher's boy who brings your meat, of the lads who sell the newspapers in the streets, shouting the latest news from the turf. In the interests of National Righteousness, we should demand the suppression of betting odds in the papers, and the enforcement of one law alike for the rich and the poor. Of the next evil named, it is enough to say here that "her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell."

By well-nigh universal consent, the greatest cause of our national "ruins" is the Liquor Traffic. General Booth, in "Darkest England," says:—"It is the tap-root of nine-tenths of our national evils." Yet, as though it were the

greatest blessing, every facility for obtaining it is thrust upon the people, and its seductive temptations abound on every hand and on all days alike. Tragedy succeeds tragedy, the dearest ties are every day sacrificed, the costliest sacrifices are every day made, and still the desolating flood rolls on. In London alone there are 14,000 public-houses and gin palaces, and not one but is a centre of demoralisation, not one (is it not true to say ?) but is responsible for the temporal, if not eternal ruin, of some soul. As a nation we recently spent in one year the almost incredible, incalculable sum of £160,891,718 in strong drink. Try to realise what this means. In the Bible there are computed to be 3,566,480 letters. The Drink Bill of last year would allow us to place £45 on each letter and leave over £2000 to spare. And what is the plea for all this vast expenditure ? It replenishes the revenue. I answer Yes ! but at the expense of national honour, national purity, national prosperity, national righteousness.

I will give but an instance or two, among many that crowd upon me of the social and spiritual ruin that is being wrought by the drink habit and curse. One of the most brilliant ministers I have ever known became its sad victim. He fell from his pulpit throne to depths of terrible degradation. His wife died of a broken heart, his children were thrown upon the world to bear their father's shame and dishonour. He was at length reduced to earning a precarious copper by selling

bootlaces in the street and eventually died in a workhouse. Verily, the drink is no respecter of persons. It often fastens on the brightest man of genius and flings his crown of honour in the dust.

I heard a Wesleyan minister relate the following incident. He was staying with one of the most respectable and respected families of his church. Coming down early one morning he found the children sipping the wine glasses that had been left overnight upon the table. He ventured to mention the matter to the parents and cautioned them against possible danger. They were quite angry with him, and never invited him to the home afterwards. Solemnly and sadly the old minister said, "I have lived to see every one of those children become a drunkard. One died upon the scaffold in expiation of the crime of murder, and as I was going up Waterloo Road, London, late one night, a hand was placed on my arm. Ah ! she was once fair to see, but now a dishevelled outcast upon the streets of London. She knelt upon the pavement and cursed the memory of her father and mother. Yes, she was one of the children that learnt to drink by sipping the wine glasses in that Methodist home." Would you save your children from such a doom ? Then set the example of personal abstinence, and let "every one over against his house" determine that by the grace of God, the accursed thing shall never more find entrance there.

This is a question essentially for the Church of Christ and Christian men and women everywhere to consider. Nehemiah's work of restoration

commenced with that midnight ride around the ruined city, in which he made himself acquainted with its condition and need ; and that is our first duty to-day. There is need, urgent need, that men, earnest men—aye, and women too—should make themselves acquainted with the awful facts that exist, and meditate upon them and pray and weep over them, “until the flood-gates of Christly sympathy and compassion shall burst open and stream forth in deeds of helpful pity.”

This is after the pattern of our Lord and Master. He did not simply look down from some supernal height upon the world’s woe, but came Himself to save, took His place among sinful men, shared their afflictions, and “bore their sin in His own body on the tree.” If we are to be as He was in this world, we cannot escape, nor should we desire to escape the fellowship of His service and suffering.

APPLYING THE REMEDY.

Is there a remedy for our national ills ? May the fallen walls be rebuilt ? Is National Righteousness possible ? Thank God the answer is *Yes !*

For many of our social evils we have to apply the practical remedy of sanitary reform, and for others, Municipal and Parliamentary action. Especially do we need this in relation to the liquor traffic. It is the duty of the Legislature “to make it easy to do right, and difficult to do wrong.” The Sunday Closing

Act for England, and the direct veto by local popular control are measures demanding the immediate recognition and enforcement of the government of the nation ; and the responsibility for such action rests to some extent upon every man's shoulder, for the men who sit on our Boards, Councils, and Parliament, are representative men. They are sent there by ourselves. The solemn duty of the vote in the interests of Righteousness is upon every Christian man and citizen.

There remains the duty of personal action : "Every man over against his house."

There can only be national righteousness as there is individual righteousness.

Pass an Act of Parliament in the court of your own conscience to abstain from all that is evil. Build your part of the wall in personal and family purity. Let your own heart and home furnish the first and noblest sphere of Christian effort. Your place may be obscure, your name unnoticed and unknown, but the great Task Master's eye is upon every single soul. Every struggle after higher holiness is noted in the Lamb's Book of Life, and every one who is true to his trust shall enter the joy of his Lord.

This brings us to our closing word. And it is this : When every remedy is applied—and all healing and helpful measures are necessary—the deepest needs of the human heart, its sin and guilt and sorrow, can only be met by the personal experience of the forgiving grace and power of God.

Is that experience ours? Then it brings with it both the impulse and the obligation to make it known to others. If men are to be saved, if the moral ruins are to be restored, if the nation is to be presented righteous before God, it must be by individual Christians, who, themselves knowing the power of the Gospel in their own hearts, seek to make it known to others. Some, like Nehemiah, are chosen leaders in this glorious work, but let us all join hand in hand that the day may be hastened when England—the land we love—shall, purged of her sins, be first among the nations to run to her Redeemer's feet and

“CROWN HIM LORD OF ALL.”

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK

“Jesus saith . . . Feed my Lambs.”—JOHN xxi. 15.

It is needless to emphasise the importance of Sunday-school work. We are deeply convinced that of all departments of Christian work, there is not one more important. That work may be defined in a sentence as

THE CHRISTIAN CULTURE OF THE YOUNG.

Its importance increases rather than diminishes with the years. The temptations to evil surrounding the path of youth were never before so numerous. Among the many adverse influences affecting our young people are—the profane language of the streets, the snares of the liquor-traffic, indecent prints, the critical, sceptical spirit of the age, a wide-spread irreverence for spiritual things, and a practical atheism, which, in the spirit, if not in the letter, denies the existence and the claims of God.

We *are bound* to care for the spiritual interests of our children. If neglected, they will inevitably *go down*, engulfed in whirlpools of destruction; if trained and nurtured for Christ, they will rise to the highest places in the Kingdom of God.

And, *first*, as to the School itself,—the material

building: we hold that it should be as bright, comfortable, and attractive as it can possibly be made. It has been said that the architect who first designed the *basement of the chapel* as the place of the Sunday-school will never be forgiven, either in this world or the next. We, however, cherish the hope that, on the ground of *ignorance*, he may obtain mercy; but for his successors of to-day there will certainly be none. Many bright and promising youths have been lost to us, denominational, because we have kept them in dark, dingy dungeons, underground-cellars, fit only to be depositories for lumber, deserted even by the ubiquitous spider, because there has not been sufficient light to attract the flies. This condition of things is happily passing away, and no relic of it will be tolerated in the twentieth century.

The Church of the future will be the Church that *cares for the children of to-day*; the one way to do it is to make the schoolroom a *second home*. The class-room is a splendid acquisition to modern school work, and, nicely furnished, may be made as home-like as home itself. And during the week, why should the chapel and school premises be shut up and barred like a monastery? We would not dare to suggest the fearful heresy of a smoking-room, but *why not the reading-room*, and opportunities for legitimate recreation? These are left too much at present to the world and the devil. Make the Sunday-school a bright, central home for the children, and you will have fulfilled one condition of successful work.

Passing from external environment, we come to

THE INTERNAL CONSTITUTION AND WORKING OF THE SCHOOL.

The question is often asked, What is the position of the school? Is it *within* the Church or *without*? We answer most unhesitatingly, **WITHIN**. It is not a separate organisation, but a vital, integral part of Church life and work. The failures of the past are largely owing to the fact that it has been treated as a separate organisation, a great gulf yawning between; and the consequence is that thousands have been lost to the Church of Christ. The school is not correctly defined, even when it is stated to be "*a nursery for the Church.*" It is a nursery *within* the Church, an enclosure where the lambs are fed, folded, and kept for Christ. This granted, and the school has a claim on the Church that is not met by the gift of *a copper at the anniversary collection*. It claims—and rightly claims—the constant care, the best talent, the fostering love of the whole Church in all her ministers and members.

Then if the school be within the Church, the *children are within*. And where else should they be? In claiming the children for Christ, we are claiming what is His own. They are His by creating fiat and redeeming blood. His, every child that lives. This is in harmony with the words of Jesus, which have been termed the "*children's charter*": "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of*

such is the Kingdom of God." On these precious words Dr Morison writes : "The kingdom of heaven, in its privileges, belongs to little children. They are 'in' it, and have a right through grace to its prerogatives. They will never be 'far,' or only 'not far' from it, unless they wilfully banish themselves, or are subjected to banishment because of rebellion. If they die in infancy, they will but ascend from a lower to a higher province, in which they will be nearer to the throne of the King."

We have all shuddered with horror at the old hyper-Calvinistic theory which Charles Kingsley has so vividly exposed and crushed in *Alton Locke*, that the children are to be regarded as the children of the devil, until it shall please God to show whether they are numbered among the elect or not. But while rejecting this horrible theory, there are many persons who think it is necessary that the devil should have the first part of the children's lives, that he has a sort of *mortgage* on the first sixteen years. They must first of all go astray, and then in a round-about but orthodox fashion, from which no variation is ever recognised, be brought to repentance and salvation ; and success is claimed when some miserable prodigal on a premature death-bed, remembering the lessons he learnt in the Sunday-school, seeks forgiveness, and is plucked as "a brand from the burning."

But is this success—the highest success ? Is this the ideal of our school work ? No. A thousand times, No ! Our highest, noblest work is by God's grace to *prevent the children from*

going astray; to keep them from the prodigal-experience; to save them ere they have gone down to perish in deep, dark gulfs of sin. Save a child, and you save a *life*, with all its mighty possibilities of usefulness unfolded. It is like the rise of a river, which, small in its beginnings, rolls on, gathers to itself tributary after tributary, deepens and widens as it flows, until it becomes deep and broad enough to bear upon its bosom "the stately ships," and goes on to pour its unmeasured volumes into the vaster sea. Yet, when the children have claimed Christ as their Saviour in personal faith and decision, have you not heard the work depreciated as being of lesser value than if it had occurred among adults?

Dr Stanford gives a case in his "Homilies on Christian Work." A deacon was speaking to a visitor about his pastor's want of success. No doubt he had often reminded his pastor of the same with much condolence. "Well," said the visitor, "what is your proof?" "Proof? why last year only one joined the Church, and he a young lad." "Sir, who was that one?" I don't know." "You must know—what was his name?" He looks into the church-book, and finds that the name of the lad, who was the only one added, was *Robert Moffat*. "Then," said the other, "when you added that *one* to your church, you added generation upon generation. It meant the evangelisation of a continent, and yet you have been making your pastor's life miserable by that dismal toll—*only one*. Do you know what they ring the

bells in heaven for? It is over the conversion of only one, and it is there reckoned to be such a success, that it makes joy in the presence of the angels of God."

I know no more beautiful example, both for parents and teachers, than the father of that godly minister, Thomas Collins. "At their birth he accepted his children as the Lord's; at their baptism he took them from the minister's arms as the Church's. Of a trust so precious, so solemnly committed, and so sealed, he held himself bound in after-time to render account. His plan of carrying out that idea was this. As soon as his children reached the age of seven years, he entered their names in his class-book, led them by the hand to the meeting as auditors, and claimed for them recognition as members. If any asked, 'Why should they be in?' his reply was, '*Nay, it is your business to show why they should be out!*'"

Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," wisely remarks: "The Lord hath not set up Churches that old Christians may keep one another warm while they live, and then carry the Church away with them when they die. No, but that they might with all care nurse still successively another generation of subjects to our Lord that may stand up in His kingdom when they are gone."

This hits straight at a great weakness of our own Church. We have accomplished much by conquest, but little by *nurture*. We have paid great attention to building from without, but have forgotten the more important

work of *building from within*. The Roman Catholic Church sets us an example in this respect. When a child comes to years of responsibility, the question is never asked, Will you *join* the Church? but the question is, Will you *LEAVE* the Church; and every means is adopted to preserve the child within its fold.

In saying this, we do not ignore the necessity of saving faith in Christ on the part of all those who have reached the age of responsibility. Nay, we emphasise it. It should be the great aim of all Sunday-school work to lead up to it, to claim the children for Christ, and lead them to a simple saving trust in Him as their Saviour and King. As this view is taken, Sunday-school work will become more and more *evangelical* in character; and a right view of the nature of the work is one of the most important conditions of success. Another condition is—

A STAFF OF RIGHTLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS.

No teacher can successfully work who is not rightly qualified. Every teacher should be a Christian, or a sincere seeker of the truth.

But it is not enough to be a Christian. There are many Christians who are just alive and no more. They have no warmth, glow, fervour. The fire has gone out, or burns only in smouldering embers. It is possible to be a Christian and yet be destitute of the

SUPREME QUALIFICATION OF POWER; not the power of knowledge, nor character, nor

instrumentality, nor numbers, but power from on High, the *power* of the *Holy Ghost*. The apostles surely were converted men ; they were Christians, they had spent three years in fellowship with Christ, yet were not ready for their appointed work—the work of preaching and teaching Christ. They lacked power. Hence the parting command of their risen Lord, “Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on High.” “Wait for the promise of the Father. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” After ten days of prayerful waiting, the Divine anointing came. “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

And the secret of all the Pentecostal glory in a sanctified Church and a converted world, was the Pentecostal power.

We have no power in ourselves, nor is there power in the mere combination of numbers. Put us all together, all the tens of thousands of teachers in our Sunday-schools, and we are only a lot of *cyphers*. We could no more save a soul than a cobweb could stop the waters of Niagara. We work to fail if we work alone, or if we work in any other strength than the Divine.

The question for us is, “May we obtain this power to-day ? May we, like the early Church, receive the baptism of fire ?” Yes, blessed be God, “the promise is unto us and to our children.” Jesus is on the throne of power

now, and still is saying, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach." Let us take the apostolic attitude, and wait for its bestowment in confident expectation. "Ask for that power; ask for it in the serene and settled habit of morning prayer, ask for it over that desperate young rebel about whom Jesus has said, 'Bring him hither to me.' Ask for it over a list of names spread fresh and fresh before the Lord every day. Drop what you have in your hands and with empty hands and empty hearts, go, take the promised power. Live in the presence of Jesus.

The old mathematician said he could heave the world if he could find another world to rest his fulcrum on. You have found the Gospel lever, you have found the power to work it, you have found the other world in which to plant it, the world of secret prayer."

Let a teacher come from the secret place with God, the fresh dew of a holy baptism resting upon him, and his class will soon recognise its presence. It is bound to make itself felt. It cannot be hid any more than you can hide the fragrant sweetness of a bank of violets, or the effulgent radiance of the risen sun.

Teachers, how important is your work! how momentous its issues! The children, in many instances, will receive their *first impressions* of Christianity from you, and more from what you *are* than from what you *teach*. They are acute observers and quickly discern the false

from the true, the counterfeit from the genuine. Be *true*, be *real*. "Are you actors? The child will know. Are you on fire with love to Christ and the children? The child will know. Are you a sufferer from an unsanctified and crotchety temper? The child will know; and perhaps your very goodness will make his badness, tempting him to hate the Bible, to hate the very name of religion. Is yours the religion that tells the truth, that is punctual to its appointments, that respects the supremacy of law, that keeps order, that is manly, that is fair, that loves much, that is willing to take up the cross and follow Christ? The child will know"; and you shall have, what is more precious than the jewelled coronets of kings, the love and confidence of the children committed to your care.

A RIGHT METHOD OF TEACHING

is also another condition of successful work; but on this there is no time to amplify. The teacher should not do all the talking. He has not to preach sermons or deliver lectures. The catechetical method of instruction is perhaps the best. The attention and interest of all the class are secured by encouraging them to ask questions or offer comments on the lesson. A good plan has lately been adopted by a senior class teacher. He gets one of his boys to write a brief paper on the subject of the lesson. The boys take it in turn, and the effort of one is eagerly taken up and discussed by all. One

thing is evident, there will not be attention without *interest*, and this, in the best way possible, must be secured.

But with the most perfect organisation, and all that is desirable on the human side, let us remember the chief lesson, that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Eternal honours await the faithful Christian teacher. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And when your work on earth is done, your memory shall be perpetuated like unto that of a noble Sunday-school worker in by-gone days, upon whose tomb was this inscription:—"Sacred to the memory of Henry Thornton, who brought little children to Christ, that He might bless them."

THE DIVINE ANOINTING

“And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”—1 JOHN ii. 20.

ST JOHN in his Epistle writes: “Ye have an anointing of the Holy One, and ye know all things.” And again: “The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, abide in Him.” St Paul also uses the same expressive term in his Epistle to the Corinthians, “Now He that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” In these words the Christian inheritance is described under a four-fold state of blessing, “established,” “anointed,” “sealed,” and having “the earnest of the Spirit,” the earnest being the pledge or first-fruits of its full and perfect possession. Upon one feature only of this exalted order of spiritual life can we now dwell, viz., *the Christian’s Anointing*. The term is derived from the Old Testament and means to consecrate by unction. It is applied to the anointing of kings, priests, prophets, and sacred things, the most sacred of all being the anointing of the high priest. “This ceremony differed materially from that observed at the installation

of an inferior servant of the temple. When any obscure priest was consecrated the unction was only suffered lightly to touch his brow ; but when the supreme priest was set apart to his office, there was poured over him such a deluge of sweet fragrant essence that it suffused his features, bathed his robes, and streamed to his very feet."

The oil itself was a specially prepared and sacred thing, being prepared by the direction of God to Moses. It was composed of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil. Its common use was strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law. "Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, he shall be even cut off from his people." It was first used at the consecration of Aaron, and subsequently at the consecration of his sons and successors in the priestly office. This was the Divine order. "Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons and successors, and sanctify them that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office." The psalmist compares the blessedness of Christian unity "to the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that came down to the skirts of his garments."

The *kings* of Israel were similarly anointed. Thus when David was chosen by God to be the successor of Saul, Samuel "took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." Prophets complete the trinity of sacred orders. Elijah was

called by God from the desert solitudes into which he had fled to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in his own stead. Priests, then, and kings, and prophets, were God's anointed ones ; the anointing being the outward expression of divine preferment and appointment, and also of the bestowment of special divine influence upon the anointed one. And a sacred thing it was in those far-back times to have passed through this ordinance. It was a position not only of envied privilege but of august solemnity. By submission to the act, the anointed one declared his complete and perfect surrender to God, and as the fragrant liquid streamed over him, the covenant on God's side was declared to be accepted. Henceforth he stood out from among his fellows, he had passed into a higher order of life, and all his actions were proportionately heightened in significance because the anointing oil of the Lord was upon him.

Now the anointing of the Old Testament was a symbol. It was the symbol of what we know now in Christ to be a glorious reality, the supreme privilege and blessedness of this later and better time. As we pass from the Old to the New Testament there is no change of the *name*. Even Christ could find no better term than the old "anointing" : all that we have changed is the symbol for the reality, the substance of which it was the hinting shadow. It signifies to us the shedding forth upon the consecrated soul by the Holy Spirit of His gracious influence and energy.

THE ANOINTING OF JESUS CHRIST.

The first great fact that meets us on the very threshold of the New Testament dispensation is that Jesus was anointed by God for His redemptive work. The very name of Christ both in Hebrew and Greek has this significance, "*The Anointed One.*" He from whom the anointing comes to us was Himself the Anointed of God. In Him the figure of the Old Testament was first of all, and pre-eminently fulfilled. He combined in Himself the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. The trinity of Old Testament sacred orders in Him became a realised and indistinguishable unity. His prophetic work was the revelation of the Being and purpose of God, his priesthood was the offering of Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and as King He reigns in the hearts of all those who believe in His Name. To Him as to no other can the glowing words of the psalmist apply: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; equity is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad." "Ye know," says St Peter, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him." The anointing of

Jesus took place at His baptismal consecration, when He left the quiet seclusion of His Nazareth home to enter upon the tearful toils of His redemptive ministry. "It came to pass," says St Luke, "that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." It has been said that the Holy Spirit like a dove had been for four thousand years seeking a human form in which He might rest, a bosom in which He might nestle, a being in whom He might find a home; but He could not find such until one day the Holy Dove hovered over the River Jordan, and there stood on the bank One whose holy soul presented Him with a perfectly pure temple. After four thousand years the Holy Dove found its home in the breast of Jesus. John saw it and bare record: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." The humanity of Jesus became the home of the Holy Ghost. "Immediately He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil," and when the terrible temptations of the wilderness were over, "He returned in the power of the Spirit into

Galilee, and a fame went out concerning Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." Coming to Nazareth He entered the synagogue, and opening the Scriptures read the prophetic announcement of Isaiah written seven hundred years before : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It is further declared that God gave the Spirit to Jesus without measure, in limitless, infinite power ; also that "He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God." All these Scriptures clearly indicate that the power in which Jesus wrought His earthly ministry was the power of the Holy Spirit, with which He was so richly anointed at the beginning and which ever abode upon Him.

Now was this necessary for Jesus, the Holy One, who was without spot or stain of sin, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who was Himself divine, claiming divine titles and honours, and accepting human worship ? If necessary for Him, then the conclusion is irresistible that the anointing which the Holy One Himself received is the premier necessity and the most glorious privilege of all believers who share His life. All our purest experiences and efforts are mixed with some alloy, and if we, His humble disciples and

servants, are to be His faithful witnesses, to make disciples of all nations, and to win to His feet the world for which He died, then we must share not only His fellowship of service but His anointing of power.

OUR ANOINTING.

May we? Yes, blessed be God, there is no fact more sure. The possibility of the immediate and continuous enjoyment of the supreme gift is set forth by Jesus Christ Himself in the clearest terms. "Again and again did He seek to quicken the languid attention of His disciples to the fact that this anointing would come to them as the very consequence of His own departure." "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him to you." "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of Him shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe in Him should receive: for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Brethren, is this the picture of your life, the *flowing, brimming river*? Not a scanty rivulet, not a little stream, occasionally flowing and occasionally dry, very dry; not an empty well, not a stagnant pool, but a river, and not one only, but *rivers*—out of him shall flow *rivers of living water*—refreshing, fertilising, gladdening as they flow. Your own soul must be so filled that it shall become a constant

source of inspiration to thousands of others with whom you come in contact. Is it so? if not, why not? Is there need to ask again St Paul's question to the Ephesian Christians, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Is His anointing fresh upon you? Then again Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." *Greater works!* Yes, for the wonders of grace in transformed human heart and lives, are ever greater than the greatest wonders that have taken place in the physical order. To turn men from darkness to light is greater than to open the blind eye, or wake the sense of hearing in the deaf, or straighten the distorted limb, greater in itself, greater in the permanence of its result; and this is the glorious work commissioned to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why is the wonder-working power so limited in its manifestation among us? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Again, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that He shall speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." The very last word of Jesus to His disciples was, "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me. John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." "Ye shall receive power after that the

Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Here, then, was the promise clear and distinct, of the anointing Spirit, and to those earlier apostles and disciples it soon became an actual and glorious experience. After ten days of prayerful intercession, amid signs and wonders of rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire, the dispensation of the Spirit was ushered in. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And not only did they speak with other tongues, but saw with other eyes, felt with other hearts, lived other lives, became other men. They knew Jesus as they had never known Him after the flesh, and possessed the power to make Him known. Hitherto timid, weak, quarrelsome, dull of understanding, they are now transformed into bold, fearless ambassadors of the cross, and through their simple testimony the souls of multitudes were reached and saved. Ere the last of them fell asleep they had carried the Gospel into every Roman province and every Grecian state, to distant islands of the sea and into every part of the known world. Whatever may be said to-day about methods, and to my own mind the New Testament includes a latitude wide enough for the most daring, inventive and aggressive worker, it yet remains an indisputable fact that the great secret of soul-reaching, soul-saving power is the anointing of the Holy Ghost. With this,

failure is impossible, without it, "the best concerted schemes are vain." If the glorious triumphs of the Apostolic Church in the first three centuries are to be repeated in the twentieth century, and with our increased light and privilege, there is no reason why they should not be entirely eclipsed in the greater glory of the Spirit's unexhausted power: then we must return to *apostolic simplicity of life* and *apostolic faith in the power of the Holy Ghost*; we must realise as distinctly and definitely as did they, the anointing of the Holy One.

The promise is unto us, to our children, and to the whole Church of God for ever. It has never been retracted, never withdrawn, nor ever shall be. We are living to-day in the very noon-tide glory of the Spirit's dispensation. We have not to pray and wait for His descent, as though He had not come; our need is not even to pray for His *outpouring*, but rather His *inletting*, for the cleansing and opening of those approaches to the soul through which His glory streams in upon us, and bathes the meanest spirit in celestial splendour. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened: we are straitened in ourselves. Oh, for a universal Pentecost, when the whole Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world shall loose the bands that bind and straiten, and abandon itself to the full possession of the Holy Ghost. I want to emphasise the fact that the *Spirit's rich anointing is for all believers in Christ*. In old time the anointing was for the *high priest* alone; now there is no priesthood save

that common priesthood into which all are exalted in Christ Jesus. If one is a priest, all are priests; if one is a prophet, all are prophets; if one is a king, all are kings. There is no inferior order in the kingdom of God. There are diversities of gifts and differences of administration, but there is *One Spirit*, and the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. The humblest Salvation lassie, who with heroic, loving purpose, dwells in the Woolwich dust-hole, to seek and save its lost residuum, has as rich, and perhaps a richer anointing than the Archbishop of Canterbury in his gilded palace at Croydon. There was no distinction made in the Spirit-inspired Church on the day of Pentecost. The women equally with the apostles were endued with the prophetic power, and began at once to preach the Saviour crucified. The tongue of fire gleamed on every head. They were *all* filled. We are slowly getting back to those earlier experiences of *Primitive Methodism*. The breakdown in the Apostolic Church came when it substituted the arm of flesh for the power of the Spirit, and the same is true of every breakdown since. Man-made and man-supported systems have been exalted in the stead of Jesus Christ, and the existence of the Holy Ghost ignored or forgotten. Thank God we are realising a return to the spirit and genius, the simplicity and purpose of earlier days, and we *shall* recover it as we personally know and teach the anointing grace of the Spirit to be the glorious privilege of all believers, arising out of our very relation-

ship to Jesus Christ. If we share His life, we also share His anointing. For He is not only our *High Priest*, but our Head. Combine these ideas and you have the entire spirit of the metaphor. He is the Head of the Church which is His body, and as the body of the priest received the anointing from the head, so we as the members of His body receive and share His anointing. The same Spirit that came down upon the Head comes down upon all the members, "down to the meanest member, down to the hand that bears the vessels of the Lord, down to the finger that beckons direction to His people, down to the very foot that dips the dust." Let us think now of one or two results immediately realised by this *anointing*.

Holiness is one of the first results. The anointing is from the *Holy One*. Holiness of heart and life is the very first demand of the spiritual kingdom. "Be ye holy, for I am holy. As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "Whatever other laws may be repealed, this will stand for ever, sacred and inviolate as the throne of God, that all who belong to the Holy One must be holy too, and holy not by the action of their infected nature, but by the grace and power of the anointing Spirit." His presence is a pure presence. It is impossible for Him to dwell in our souls without making us holy too. A favourite metaphor of St Paul is that of the temple, "Know ye not that ye are the *temple* of God?" That temple as the Spirit finds it is unclean and dishonoured, but He cleanses it for

His own habitation, and, when cleansed, every chamber of it becomes pure and radiant in the light of His glory. Its light streams out upon surrounding darkness like the beacon-flame on the rock-bound coast, and every such Christian is both consciously and unconsciously the saviour of his fellow-men. On its passive side there is no power equal to the power of holiness. It is felt beyond its possessor. The circumference of its influence reaches beyond the narrow limits of time. Its scope is eternal. A holy character, a holy life, a holy influence cannot be hid. Its speech betrays itself. The fragrance of its sweet anointing is scented from afar. The shining holiness of Fenelon sent away from under his roof the scoffing Earl of Peterborough, saying, "I must not stay here, or I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." The steadfast devotion of Henry Thornton led men to say, "It is not more Boyle and Bampton lectures we want, but a thousand Henry Thorntons." All the literary apologetics that have ever been written are not so powerful as the testimony of a holy life, which reveals to all the blessed possibility of deliverance from sin, and the positive possession of the graces and fruits of the Spirit.

Illumination, or spiritual perception, is the second result. "Ye have an anointing, and *ye know all things.*" The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual insight, keen perception of the deep and secret things of God. The prophet Isaiah declared of Jesus Christ that "the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon Him; the Spirit of wis-

dom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God, and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Literally He shall *draw breath* in the fear of the Lord. This was gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He needed no human teacher, for the Spirit in measureless inspiration was upon Him, and when He spake it was with authority, and not as the Scribes. But it is also fulfilled in us, for the same inspiration communicated to us produces the same result. St John states the truth in infinite breadth: "Ye know *all things*." This, of course, in an absolute sense can apply only to God, but relatively the whole kingdom of God, in its heights, depths, lengths, breadths, is the possession of the Christian believer. The Spirit reveals to him its secret treasures of blessing. It is the Spirit who first of all quickens, creates the very capacity of spiritual vision. Then He loves to satisfy the ever-widening capacity His own hand has created. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, St Paul writes: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him"; and the poor commentators one after another, in their exposition of the passage, go off into rhapsodies over the glorified heavenly state, and the hymn-writers have set forth the apostle's supposed sentiment in the hymn, "There's a land that is purer than day," but the context immediately shows that St Paul had no reference whatever to the future state of glory, for

he says, "But God hath revealed it unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." St Paul had no thought of the world of future blessedness. He was anxious to show to Christians that there is a world of present blessedness in Christ; but that to the natural man it is a world unseen, unheard, and unknown. He says in effect, The kingdom of God is a spiritual revelation. It is not palpable to the outward senses, nor discernible by the keenest intellectual thought. It is a *revelation*, distinct, immediate to the spirit of man by the Spirit of God. Carlyle said: "The eye sees what it brings power of seeing. To Newton and to his dog Diamond what a different pair of universes." Yes, for the eye of the philosopher could take in a far wider range than the eye of his dog; but know, thou vain man, that the keenest eye of the keenest philosopher that ever lived has never penetrated the veil that hides the kingdom of God from natural sight. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." It is said of a distinguished baronet that in reading the "Bible Christian Jubilee Volume" he observed that the words "found peace" often occurred. He could not understand it, and sought to know what it meant. Ah! many an unlettered labourer on his own estates, who in a little roadside Methodist chapel had seen the vision of the face of God in Christ, and lost the burden of his guilt as he looked and lived, and

has since bathed his soul in the glory that streams from the upper heaven, as he walked and talked with God, could have told the great landed proprietor what finding peace meant ; and such a man, rude and uncultured though he be, but born of the Spirit, has a wider vision, and a nobler range of life than the greatest great men of the world who have never felt the quickening inspiration that is imparted to the humblest children of God.

Power is the third and last result on which I will now dwell. “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” The Greek word rendered here is *δύναμις*, which in one of its significations means a force for war. It is said that when the inventor of nitro-glycerine wanted a word to express that powerful substance, he hit upon this Greek word, and called it dynamite. If you accept that rendering it would read, “Ye shall receive dynamite after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” But if you hesitate at this, you are bound to recognise the truth, that the Spirit of God is the great dynamic force in the spiritual kingdom. His invisible but almighty presence is the secret power that sets in motion all the vast machinery of Church order and organisation ; and without His presence, that machinery is as powerless as an engine without steam. Now power is difficult to define. Like life, like electricity, you cannot put it into a definition, but you are conscious of its presence. Power ! see it in nature, in the wind that scatters the clouds and rocks the trees, and lashes the sea into tempests of fury.

See it in the great force of gravitation that holds the universe under its gentle spell, shaping the tear that rolls down the infant's cheek, and holding the belted planets in their shining spheres. There it is. But you cannot see or dissect or analyse or weigh it. So with the power of the Holy Spirit. Beecher said, "I have no philosophy about it. I don't know how my words wake corresponding echoes in your hearts. I don't know how a mother pours her love into her child's soul. I do not know how soul touches soul, how thought touches thought, or how feeling touches feeling, but I know it does. And that which I see in the lower departments of life, I take and by imagination lift it up into the divine nature, and give it depth and scope and universality, and then I have some conception of God's Holy Spirit being poured into the human soul." It is God Himself entering the nature He has redeemed, purifying and perfecting, and filling it with His own life. The power is not human but divine. It is not a question of what we can do, but of what God can do through us. I used often to go to my work asking Him to go with me, as if I were the chief performer. I am learning the lesson more and more to ask God to take me with Him. The measure of our power to bless others will be the measure in which we receive the power of His Spirit. We can only strive according to His power which worketh in us.

Power must be attested by *results*. There is the simple fact concerning the first apostles

that when anointed of the Holy Ghost they were filled with power: power to speak, to witness, to testify: power to suffer and to die. The power of the Spirit to them was the power of courage, of steadfastness, of a holy daring that feared neither men, devils, death, nor sin. In that power they shook the world, and turned the hearts of multitudes to the Cross. The same fact is true to-day. One of the most successful soul-winners is Mr Moody. He tells us that he was preaching a long time without results. Faithful friends spoke to him about it. He searched his own heart and found that his preaching had degenerated into self-display and a love of human praise. He prostrated himself before God, and day by day lived in continuous prayer. It was while he was walking in the street that the mighty power of God came upon him. He rushed into an hotel, and there in the seclusion of a private room gave vent to his over-filled soul. All he could do was to praise the Lord, and such was the exceeding weight of glory that he was obliged to cry, "Lord, stay Thy hand." From that day to this he has preached in simple dependence upon the power of the Spirit, and with the result that hundreds of thousands have been drawn through him to the Christ of God. What God has done for Mr Moody, He wants to do for all. The promise is unto us to-day. Why is it not claimed? Why is the Church in such a large proportion of her members destitute of the prophetic gift, lacking the soul-winning power. If we are not filled it is not that the heavenly reservoirs are

run dry. The human channel is choked. Self and sin are filling the place of Jesus Christ. God only gives His Spirit's anointing grace to the consecrated spirit. An entire submission to the will of God is on the human side the secret of its possession. When no idol is cherished, when no conscious sin comes between the soul and Christ, when all is surrendered, *all*—He will accept nothing less, and anything less we should be ashamed to bring—then the special gift of power is received; and the solemn responsibility rests upon us for its reception. The act of consecration is ours, the gift of power is God's, and there is never one without the other. No sooner does the sacrifice touch the altar than the fire of God descends; that fire which once kindled in the faithful soul never more goes out.

I will close with some words from Dr Dale, which I heard from his own lips, and which made an indelible impression on my heart. "You will do nothing," said he, "unless you preach in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Some of us can have but few years to live, and fewer still to work for God and men. The evening star is shining in the darkening sky. The autumn leaves are falling around us. We seem to be walking through fields of stubble from which the poor harvests of our past toil have been reaped. Wintry days are coming on, and for us in this world there cannot be another spring. But *you* have your years before you; receive the testimony of those of us who leave the greater part of our

life behind us. Your generous impulses, your natural powers of learning, will achieve nothing in the higher region of human life, in which alone the enduring results of our life are to be found, unless you have obtained the gift of the Holy Spirit. Seek it until it is yours. I want to insist with an earnestness that I know not how to express that the Christian Gospel in its purity, in its grace, is as powerless to restore men to God as the most corrupt form of heathen superstition, apart from the power of the Holy Ghost. If we lose Christ, what should we have to say to men. Ah! but it matters little what we say to men about Christ if we have lost His Spirit. One man will do more than a thousand, if anointed and filled with the Spirit, in drawing a multitude to God."

STEPHEN, THE PROTO-MARTYR

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”—Accts vii. 59, 60.

I KNOW no subject of greater interest than the history of the Church of Christ. Especially is it interesting to go back to its beginning and mark the methods and circumstances of its early growth. If Livingstone did not think it vain to spend some of the best years of his life in the far-off solitudes of Africa, to reach the source of the Nile, much less vain shall it be for us to go back in thought, and tarry awhile amid the earliest springings of that other river whose streams make glad the city of God.

First of all, then, at the ascension of Christ, the members of the infant Church were but few, and were neither learned nor wealthy. The total number of believers gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost was one hundred and twenty.

But their number speedily multiplied as the power of God attended their ministry. After receiving the holy baptism, the work of witnessing began, and to listening crowds in the streets of Jerusalem, Peter bears his faithful testimony. The hearts of men swayed under its influence, as a rustling cornfield under summer breezes,

and ere the day closed, the little band had grown to a grand total of *three thousand*.

And the inspiration of that great Pentecostal day *remained*. It was not as the fitful meteor, which for a moment flashes out in the dark sky, and then leaves it darker than it was before, but, like the steady stars, it shone on. The Holy Ghost came to stay.

Those fishers of men, as Jesus designated the Apostles, had had a good catch, but they did not fold their arms, drop their nets and oars, and adopt the rest-and-be-thankful policy. Nay! they were only fired to more earnest and faithful endeavour. They realised that it was only the beginning of what was to be a world-wide sweep of the Gospel net. And so the suggestive words are recorded, "The Lord added to the Church," not once a month, or once a week, but "*daily* such as should be saved."

Mr Spurgeon has said that some Churches make as much noise over one converted soul as a hen over a new-laid egg. It is so rare an event. Alas! the charge is too true. Is there not a cause?

My brethren, the salvation of the people is not to be with us an occasional attempt, but *our constant work*. It cannot be relegated to a fortnight's special services in the winter, but *must be our every-day aim the whole year through*. And by so much as our energies are spent in this direction, do we build up ourselves; indeed, the ingathered force is ten-fold greater than the expended force. Our

light will brighten by diffusion. Larger and purer will become our own fountains of life and strength as their healing streams flow out, to the blessing and salvation of others. This is the picture of the Church in apostolic days.

There was power in the ministry. "With great power gave the Apostles witness of Christ, and great grace was upon them all." That there was something revolutionary about it is evident from the description of the Apostles by their foes as "these that have turned the world upside down."

Our greatest need is power; the power of the Holy Ghost. The Church can have no greater curse than a powerless ministry.

There were *signs following*. Signs and wonders were wrought in the name of Jesus. The sick were healed, the dead raised, devils cast out, "and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and of women."

And now, like some bright and beautiful star of evening which appears just above the horizon, lends its charms to the peaceful eventide, and then departs to shine in other spheres, *Stephen* rises into notice. Brief but brilliant is his history. All that is said of him can be put into a nutshell, and yet he has left us one of the brightest examples of holy living and dying ever recorded by secular or inspired historian. The same is true of others. But little is known of some of the most eminent saints of God. Of Enoch, one short sentence covers his life, embracing a period of three hundred and sixty-five

years. "He walked with God and was not, for God took him."

Of our Lord Himself, the records of thirty out of the thirty-three years of His earthly life, are for the most part, folded up in the chambers of silence. It is so still. The noblest deeds of Christian heroism are not chronicled in our newspapers or magazines.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

But the day is coming when those who have known nothing of the want and suffering, sacrifice and toil of Christian service, shall stand back in the shade, while God's unknown and unrecognised ones who have come up from beds of patient suffering ; from scenes of hard and life-long toil for Christ ; from unfrequented graves on distant shores ; from caves and hollows where their unburied bodies mouldered with the march of time ; from lonely garrets, where, week in, week out, the busy fingers stitched to earn a scanty livelihood ; when these shall stand out in the light and, with the Master for whom and with whom they suffered, be eternally glorified.

The first mention that we have of Stephen is where he is chosen as an elder of the church, with six others ; and with this particular object, to care for the poor, to serve at the tables and distribute the food that had been purchased out of the common fund.

But these seven men were not to be any-

bodies. They must be selected men, men of honest report, of good character, and above all, "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

The first of the seven is Stephen, the appendix to whose name here and elsewhere, always is "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

What a lesson is here for the Church of Christ to-day. If for the humblest, most menial offices of the Church, the men must be thus divinely called and endued, what of its highest offices? What of the sacred functions of the Christian ministry? We dare not lower the standard now; and our church will be rich in spiritual results in proportion as its offices are filled by men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Men like Stephen most we want. He very soon showed his fitness for this and for higher work, for being "full of faith and power he did great wonders and miracles among the people." Burning and shining for Christ, his life became a mighty factor in the Church's early growth. Don't be frightened at the word "miracles." We shall see them again when we have got rid of our unbelief.

"Those who deny the supernatural power of Christ have only begun their task, when they have stated their case against the miracles which are recorded in the narratives of His earthly life. They have to descend through the Christian centuries, and to destroy the trustworthiness of the long succession of penitents and saints who have testified of their own knowledge that He was living still. The life of every Christian man adds to the great story,

new miracles of mercy and of power wrought by Christ. The Canon is not closed. Every age contributes material for new Gospels."¹

Every life that is truly consecrated and filled with the Spirit, *abounds* in miracles of mercy.

Stephen's ministry, so blessed and fruitful while it lasted, was soon to be cut short. It was a brief day, making up in intensity what it lacked in duration. But it is not to be measured by the number of its years; nor is any true life.

"We live in deeds, not years,
In thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial. .
We should count time by heart-throbs,
He most lives, who thinks most,
Feels the noblest, acts the best."

Persecution soon arose. There are some men about whom the Devil does not alarm himself much. Professors they may be, but they are too cold and lazy to do good. They will never set the Thames on fire, or the tiniest rivulet that runs into it. But where is the earnest man? the most faithful and enthusiastic in his Master's service? He is selected for the hottest and sharpest of the fiery darts of the wicked one. Brethren, is such your case? Then rejoice therein. The very conflict attests your life. It is only the dead fish that floats down the stream. By false accusation Stephen was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, and witnesses suborned to appear against him, whose lying testimony was as freely given as

¹ Dr Dale.

it had been sought. But “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” One man, with God on his side, is always in the majority. If God be for us, who can be against us? And so fully did Stephen’s peaceful spirit rest in the smile and favour of heaven, that the mantle of the body became too transparent to hide the inner glory, and as the crowded council gazed steadfastly on their captured victim, they beheld, to their wonder and awe, a supernatural radiance bathing his upturned face. “They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”

Thus, like Moses on Sinai, and the transfigured Christ on the heights of Hermon, was the proto-martyr honoured. This fact also involves a *principle*. A transfigured soul will transfigure both body and life in its own glow. Get the glory *within* and it is bound to shine *without*. Stephen’s speech in self-defence is a masterly sketch of Jewish history from the call of Abraham to the crucifixion of Christ, whom he terms the Just One, and accuses his hearers of being betrayers and murderers. He fastened the guilt where it was due, but it was more than they could bear. Their envy was exasperated into hatred. They were cut to the heart and gnashed upon him with their teeth.

Survey the contrast between the infuriated Sanhedrim, swayed by passions of hell; and the calm, holy Stephen, filled with the Divine Spirit, unruffled by a single fear, gazing up into heaven, the invisible glory of the eternal world bursting in brighter effulgence upon him as he

looked, and causing him to shout for very rapture.

Then the whole council rushed upon him, and like savage tigers, eager for the taste of blood, cast him out of the city and stoned him unto death.

And earth numbered one less, and heaven one more saint, and more interesting still, the first of "the noble army of Christian martyrs."

We must pause again to notice that *persecution has been, and will be, more or less, the lot of the Church of Christ in every age.*

The whole of the Apostles suffered for their Master's sake, kindling the martyr-spirit in a thousand others. Outside the city gates of Rome, Paul finished his illustrious course, and at the stroke of the executioner's axe his liberated spirit hastened to its righteous crown.

Then came the ten great persecutions under the infamous Emperors of Rome, the first of which was set on foot by Nero, a name deeply stained with crime. Multitudes were apprehended, and with or without trial (it did not matter much), condemned. "They were dragged at the heels of wild horses. They were roasted on red-hot grid-irons. The skin was torn from their flesh piece by piece; they were sawn asunder; they were wrapped in skins and daubed with pitch, and set in Nero's gardens at night to burn. They were left to rot in dungeons. They were made a spectacle to all men in the amphitheatre; the bears hugged them to death, the lions tore them to pieces, the wild bulls tossed them on their horns." During the last of these

persecutions, which raged for ten long years, houses filled with Christians were set on fire, and whole droves twisted together with ropes were flung into the sea. Thus for three hundred years, the Roman Empire poured forth its vials of hatred upon the Christian religion ; but only to have poured upon itself in the after-time the hotter vials of the wrath of God. The terrible story is told by Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

The day of reckoning always comes.

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

Nevertheless Christianity spread. The legions of Cæsar's armies were powerless to destroy the Church of Christ. Succeeding centuries bear the same testimony. The kingdoms of this world have continued to oppose the kingdom of Christ, but they have gone down before it. On their demolished thrones God has built the temples of His praise, and to-day from the far East where, in China, the dawn of a brighter day is come, to those remote regions where the axe of the emigrant rings in the clearings of the West, the Church of Christ goes on to conquer. Infidelity has sketched the title of another book, "*The decline and fall of the kingdom of Christ.*" *It will never get beyond the title-page.* That kingdom has had its rise, it lives to-day in millions of regenerated hearts in earth and heaven, and shall yet obtain universal dominion. And what shall be said in subsequent ages of the Huguenots, the Waldenses, the Covenanters,

the Puritans, who were hunted through their native lands like partridges on the mountains, on whose sequestered worship the baying of the fierce dogs of war would often break driving them to darker dens and gloomier caves for shelter ; whose bones lay bleaching on the hills their fathers trod, crying in mute eloquence to heaven, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Dr Beaumont once said that fifty millions of Protestants had been slain at one time and another. Their bodies, if piled in one heap, would be higher than Mont Blanc.

"Next the throne in glory they."

But this persecution has done its good work. The same Lord who trod the lake of Galilee and hushed its storm to calm, has walked these fiery waves of human passion, and made the wrath of men to glorify His name.

In old time when the three brave young Hebrews were cast into the burning furnace, the spectators were amazed to see *a fourth* walking with them, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God, all walking together its fiery floors as though it were a daisied meadow.

Not always as visibly, but always *as really*, has the Mighty Saviour been with His suffering followers, inspiring them with courage to do, to dare, and to die. In this matter grapes have grown on thorns, and figs have sprung from thistles. The ages that have been most monstrous for persecution have most adorned Christianity. The Gospel has won its grandest triumphs at the scaffold and the stake. The

blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church.

Not to speak of others, see how the martyrdom of Stephen was sanctified in its influence upon the Christian church. Reverently let us look on the *last scene*.

“Tread softly, it is hallowed ground ;
The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walks of life
Quite on the verge of heaven.”

It is never a little thing to die, and its importance is heightened under circumstances like these. There is something inexpressibly sacred and solemn about the last hour on earth. Every wish of the dear dying one is kept inviolate. Every word is treasured up as gold, and when summers have come and gone, and the wind sighs through the grassy coverlet of the body’s resting-place, as fresh and tender as ever are the looks and farewells of that last hour. To Stephen it was full of wonderful experiences. There were raptures of soul that almost put out of thought the pains of the body, and heavenly visions rarely so fully given. Ere he was cast out of the city, while yet in the council-chamber, “being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven.” Well, where should we look when other helpers fail and earthly comforts flee, but *up* ; up to the everlasting hills, to the heaven of our God ?

And, bless God, when there is no way in front, and no way behind, and no way either to the right or to the left, *there is always a way*

up. In the darkest day or night, there's brightness overhead. What a reward had Stephen for his faith ! Oblivious of his surroundings, basking in the glory of the upper heavens, he cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

If before, his face was clothed with angelic brightness, what ineffable lustre must now have rested upon it ! The most glorious feature in this vision was the presence of Christ.

He saw Jesus *standing*. Everywhere else in the Holy Scriptures Jesus is represented as sitting. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The kings of the earth take counsel together ; He sits. The heathen rage ; He sits. Change, turmoil, confusion, are among the nations ; He sits. Earth's mightiest revolutions disturb His throne no more than the tiny wavelet, the huge rock over which it noiselessly breaks. But lo ! a wonder in heaven ! Jesus *STANDS*. All ages have interpreted the posture aright. He stands to welcome the sufferer home. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

The martyr is hastened to his crown. Dragged outside the city, the pitiless stones fall thick and fast upon him, flung by scores of furious arms. Weaker at every blow, he falls upon his knees, and above the clamour of tongues, and the confused babblings of the multitude who witnessed the tragic scene, his voice is heard in

humble prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then rallying his exhausted powers for a final utterance, he cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The prayer was an echo of Calvary; a precious transcript of the cross. Like his dying Master, his last thoughts are of his foes, and they breathe themselves in the holy prayer that they may be forgiven.

"And when he had said this, he *fell asleep*"; not on feathered couch or pillow, but in the loving clasp of the everlasting arms. *Asleep*. Beautiful, blessed word! "For so He giveth His beloved sleep." "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

And best of all are the tender words of Him to whom the mysteries of life and death are no mysteries at all. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."

"Weep not, she is not dead but sleepeth." The very nature of death is changed as we thus think of it. Its gloom disappears in the remembrance that it is only a sleep. It shall hold its own only for a time. It shall be only as the night, soon to be banished in the dawn of *that day* that shall never know an eventide.

"The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul." "Saul was consenting to his death." These references partially reveal what we believe to be a sacred connection between the martyrdom of Stephen and the conversion of the future Apostle to the Gentiles. Augustine has said that the world owes Paul to Stephen's dying prayer. But whether this be so or not, Stephen's was the first

dying testimony to the power of the Christian faith, and “ being dead, he yet speaketh.”

And now, brethren, though the sword hangs not over our heads, and the fires of Smithfield are put out, and the torture chambers of the inquisition are shut up, and the rack, thumb-screw, axe and block are curiosities for exhibition in the Tower of London, yet the spirit of the world is as hostile as ever to the Spirit of Christ. They have not all died who sneer at the Christian name. There is still a tyranny that holds its own, and life is full of wants and woes. None are “ carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease.” Through much tribulation we shall enter the Kingdom. The demand for Christian fortitude and faithfulness is upon us all. We are all called to daily devotion, to holy fruit-bearing, to perpetual service, to translate into our varied life the meaning and excellency of the Christian religion. Alike in service and in suffering, the Saviour’s sacred charge is given, “ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It remains for us briefly to enquire into *the secret of Stephen’s fortitude*.

Whence his calm, dignified demeanour before the Sanhedrim ; whence his majestic fearlessness, his patient endurance, his noble elevation of character, his glorious triumph in the hour of death ? Was it born of physical strength ? Nay. Men of firmer muscle have failed where Stephen triumphed. Was it born of intellectual conviction ? Nay. Many men have shrunk from suffering for intellectual convictions ;

Galileo, for example. You have the secret of Stephen's fortitude in the fact stated three times, that he was a man "*full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.*" This is the key to the innermost chambers of his being.

Faith is soul-vision. It apprehends the things eternal and invisible as clearly and really as the natural eye beholds the physical creation. The man of faith stands in the presence of God as he stands in the light of the sun, and "*beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"

Stephen believed in God. His entire being was radiant with the glory of the Divine presence. He had grasped the redemptive purpose of God in the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ, and lived to make it known. He believed in his own immortality. His vision was not bounded by the narrow horizon of this life.

When a boy, looking from my home on the distant hills of Rough-tor and Brown-willy, I used to think they touched the sky, but have grown to find out that when you get there the sky is just as far off as ever.

Death seems the horizon where the earth and the sky meet, but when the saints of God have got there, they have seen brighter suns, serener skies, wider horizons. Thomas Lynch's last words were, "*Now I am going to begin to live.*" So to Stephen, the fear of martyrdom was forgotten in the joyful conviction that it was a shorter, sharper passage to endless glory.

He believed in his work, that it was as imperishable as himself ; that no holy thought or deed is lost, and that the earthly life with all its wrongs redressed, all its imperfections perfected, all its sufferings glorified, should be reproduced in a tearless, fadeless heaven. And this faith was Stephen's in no scanty measure. He was *full* of it. Hence there was no room for doubt nor distrust. Where there is fulness of light there cannot be darkness, so fulness of faith forbids the presence of doubt. The measure of our power will be proportioned by the measure of our faith. "According to your faith, be it unto you." It is our gracious privilege to claim the unlimited promise, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Here was the secret of Stephen's strength. But there is a deeper depth still. He was not only full of faith, but of the Holy Ghost. We do not know the time or place, where he received, like the earliest Apostles, the Divine enduement. It is enough for us to know that he possessed it in a very gracious measure, and his life evidenced its presence and power.

My brethren, we are face to face with a fact which, as to the method of its bestowment, I cannot explain. But this is not strange. How does a blade of grass grow ? I don't know. How does a mother pour her love into her child's soul ? I don't know. How do my words reach and touch your thoughts and feelings now ? I don't know. Neither can I explain how it is that my life is taken up and interwoven with the life of God, so that my weak-

ness gives place to strength, timidity to courage, sorrow to joy, sin to holiness, but praise God, *I know that it is so.*

My testimony is akin to that of the blind man whom Jesus sent to the pool of Siloam. When he came back seeing, the Pharisees plied him with many questions concerning the miracle. But his only reply was, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." It is the testimony of all who have received the fulness of the Spirit, that while they cannot unfold the mystery of grace, they are blessedly conscious of a new power; power to bear insult without resentment; power to witness for Christ, in the home, in the shop, in the street, or wherever the Master calls them. If Stephen were thus filled with the Holy Ghost until his face shone, if the Apostles were thus filled until they shook the world, why may we not be filled to-day? Why not? Only unbelief can prevent it.

And we must be filled. We must get to our Pentecost. I do not know how to utter strongly enough the conviction that grows stronger in me every day, that it is not enough for us to have got barely saved, it is not enough that we are ministers and members of the Church of Christ, it is not enough that we preach the Gospel and hold our regular weekly services; unless we are baptised with the baptism of fire, filled with the Holy Ghost, our lives will be barren of the highest results. A piece of cold iron placed on this wood would make no impression, were it to remain fifty years, but get it red-hot, and a second's contact is sufficient.

Apart from the indwelling of the Spirit, we are as the cold iron, we shall move nobody, save nobody, but filled with the fire of the Spirit, a moment's contact will leave an everlasting impress.

“Are believers to grow up as plants and as willows by the water-courses? It is because the Lord pours His Spirit upon the seed and His blessing upon the offspring. Is there in the valley of vision where the bleaching bones for years have lain, to be the heaving and breathing of a new life. It is only as the Spirit of the Lord comes from the four winds and breathes upon the slain. Is the temple of the Lord to be reared in the goodliness of its architectural symmetry? It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

May we, like Stephen, be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, that our life may be as fruitful, our death as triumphant, our eternity as glorious as his.—AMEN.

THE SOCIETY OF ENCOURAGERS

“They helped every one his neighbour ; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.”—ISAIAH xli. 6.

IT is laid upon me to suggest the formation of a new society. I know that societies already exist in multitude—societies religious, political, social, literary, etc.; but there is room for another, there is room for mine. It need not displace any existing ones that are worthy of continuance; it can fulfil its purpose by infusing into them all a new spirit—a spirit of brightness, of good cheer and strengthening comradeship. I propose to call it

“THE SOCIETY OF ENCOURAGERS.”

I have termed it a new society, but, as if to prove there is nothing new under the sun, I find that such a society existed in days as long ago as those of the prophet Isaiah. And this is the record of it: “They helped every one his neighbour ; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering : and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.” What could be more idyllic or beautiful than this? Our new society, then, is but a

reconstruction of the old, and we cannot do better than lay it on the old foundations. Its basis is therefore laid in *neighbourliness* and *brotherliness*. The grammar books will define these as abstract nouns, but in real life they stand for very concrete and tangible things. In the new society we are neighbours. "They helped every one his neighbour." Does anyone ask, "Who is my neighbour?" Let him read again the parable of the Good Samaritan. In that "sweet story of old," neighbourliness stands for love, sympathy, kindness, help, and all those qualities that constitute practical religion. It bridges at a leap the chasm of national distinction. It recognises another's need as the opportunity of coveted service, and puts its willing shoulder under the weight of another's burden. We are neighbours, not ascetics or misanthropes, but lovers of our fellow men. We are not separate units, having independent existences, so that we can live to ourselves and die to ourselves; nay, we are "members one of another," sharers of a common life, with its blended joys and sorrows, with common interests to serve, common rights to guard and a common purpose to fulfil.

My neighbour's house may be near or far in situation, his rental may stand at £80 a year, and mine at £20. His walls may be adorned with the costliest pictures, and I may be indebted to the enterprising activity of tradesmen at Christmas-time for any adornment on mine; or the financial positions of each may be transposed, but we are neighbours. We live to

help each other. Is there trouble anywhere? Is anyone in need? That is enough, my place is there; and when the hour of distress comes for me, I shall not be without a friend.

But there is a deeper word still. In the new society we are *brothers*. "Every one said to his brother, "Be of good cheer." This strikes a yet tenderer chord. "Have we not all one Father?" Has not Jesus taught us to pray, without distinction or difference, "Our Father"? Are we not therefore all brothers? Accept the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man is the necessary sequence. This involves a common obligation of brotherly love, which the new society exists to emphasise. It turns out what is professedly beautiful in theory into actual living fact, by working it out in daily life and experience. It will settle the relations between capital and labour by uniting master and man in a common bond of reciprocal interest. Carry it to its furthest issue, and it will solve all questions of national and international strife by bringing in the reign of "Peace on earth and goodwill to men."

"Till the war-drum throbs no longer and the battle-flags are furled,
In the Parliament of man, the federation of the world."

And now as to its *raison d'être*. The new society exists for kindly speech to one another. "Every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." A word in season, how good it is! There is helpfulness and inspiration in kindly,

encouraging speech. The ministry that never fails is the ministry of encouragement. Speak the kind word when you can. The burdens of life are heavy for most of us, and its tasks are stern. Let no one fall by the way for want of a word of cheer, and, if one has fallen, help to place him on his feet again. "Set a watch at the door of your lips," and bite the tip of your tongue off rather than utter the hasty, unkind, uncharitable word that may rankle as a festering wound, and, once uttered, can never be recalled. Many unhappy divisions have existed even in Christian Churches and among Christian brethren from an ungoverned tongue, but the new society will change all that. It exists for kindly speech *of* one another. The detractor may find a miserable sort of pleasure in defaming others, but be not of his company. Rather cultivate the charity that thinketh no evil, that puts the best construction on the motives and actions of others, that is generous in its recognitions, and large hearted in its sympathies.

In the new society we pledge ourselves to think and act towards the living as we do for those who have passed into the Great Silence. Many have died before their time for want of a Society of Encouragers. Sympathy is vain that is reserved for the eulogy of the dead or flower-wreaths for the coffin-lid. Expend it now. Open now love's alabaster box, and let its sweet spices enrich and sweeten the moral atmosphere around you. "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one

another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

The new society exists also for *mutual effort*. "They helped every one his neighbour." The kindly word is valuable and precious, but it is better still when crystallised in action. St James, the practical apostle of the New Testament, will not acknowledge even the value of faith unless it is followed by corresponding deed. And he is right. We have had enough, and more than enough, of a religion of mere creed and form. What the world wants is the practical application of the religion of Jesus Christ, whose human life is summed up in the brief sentence, "Who went about doing good." There is a sense in which each one of us must bear his own burden, known only to himself and his God ; there is another, in which we may "bear each other's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The new society is a Society of *Workers*. "The carpenter encouraged the goldsmith." You can put your own trade or profession in. All may be included whose calling is honest, just and pure. God meant us to work, by hand and brain, or both. And the happiest man is he who is most active. But what is wanted is a sense of comradeship, and this the new society provides. The isolation is removed. We no longer work alone, but side by side, in the world's great workshop. And the work is set to the music of

"The melodies that abide,
Of the everlasting chime."

The uniting bond of all is *Love*. "All the law is fulfilled in one word. Thou shall *love*." By this is Christian discipleship tested and demonstrated that ye "love one another." "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Love is the common bond that unites us—man to man, neighbour to neighbour, brother to brother, and all together to Him who is Love's primal fount and source. I have no roll-book to issue, but I beg each reader of these lines to enrol himself, for this year and all years after, a member of the Society of Encouragers.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER AND HIS MINISTRY

(Charge given to the Young Men received into Full Connexion at the Annual Conference, St Austell, Friday, July 29th, 1904.)

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”—ACTS xx. 24.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—It is with a sense of deep solemnity that I approach the task of addressing you on this, the most important and memorable hour in your lives, when, amid the sacred associations of this time and place, you are set apart—separated by the Holy Ghost—and dedicated in an unreserved surrender of heart and life to the highest and holiest service that is possible to man on earth.

In the presence of this congregation, in the presence of a great cloud of witnesses who hold us in full survey, and in the presence of God Himself, you have taken upon you the vows of the Christian ministry. Henceforth you are to be *the ministers of Jesus Christ*. Let the thought, in all its deep significance, take possession of your minds, the ministers of Jesus Christ,—*That*, and nothing else, for nothing else is possible, if you are to walk worthy of your high vocation, and fulfil its loftiest ideals. The

ministry is not to be to you one thing among many things that may be taken up or laid down as occasion may suit or pleasure suggest; not a series of detached commissions and occasional inspirations, but *your life and your life-work*, a calling, a vocation, a passion, that must send the warm current of its life-blood from the inmost centre to the outmost circumference of being and of service.

However wide the fields of opportunity that may open up before you, however varying the service demanded, however diverse the problems of human life that may press upon your attention, your ministry will embrace them all, stamp them all with the seal of a common sacredness, and gather all the multiform activities of life into one unbroken unity.

In thinking of the Christian minister and his ministry, my mind has naturally turned to the life and character of Paul as furnishing the ideal which, next to Jesus Christ, you should seek to imitate. From the day when he received his call to the Apostleship to the day when he laid down his charge with his body, one supreme purpose absorbed the undivided energy of his soul, one mighty passion possessed him—"to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Listen to his words that we utter tremulously after him—tremulously because we fear that they should mean less on our lips than they did to him—"For to me to live is Christ." "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things and do

count them but dung, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him." "Necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And yet once more—and in all literature there is nothing more tenderly beautiful, in all Christian experience there is no example of consecration more complete or courage more resolute: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

I ask you now to think of this utterance as supplying you with a true ideal of the Christian ministry, as embodying an illustrious example of that ministry and as inspiring a powerful incentive to attain unto the same exalted standard. It teaches us that

I. Our Ministry is Divinely Appointed.

"The ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." How careful the Apostle is, in all his utterances and in all his Epistles, to state that he received his call and commission direct from heaven. "Paul, an apostle, not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the

dead." He was no *man-made minister*. He claimed his place in the Christian ministry by the direct revelation and appointment of Jesus Christ. With his own eyes he had seen Him, the risen, reigning Lord, and the vision had regenerated his nature and transformed his life. With his own ears he had heard the voice that speaks from heaven, and no authority on earth, apostolic or ecclesiastic, could have made him more fully the minister of Jesus Christ than he was.

There is a theory that a certain form of ecclesiastical ordination is necessary to a place in the Christian ministry. That theory has been concisely put in the following shape: "Without apostolic authority, no bishop; without a bishop, no priest; without a priest, no sacrament; without a sacrament, no Church; without a Church, no means of grace or reconciliation of man with God." But if this theory of apostolic succession be correct, then Paul, the greatest of all the apostles, *had no place in it*, for, to begin with, he recognised no apostolic authority. He claimed his relation to Christ to be *immediate, personal, absolute, and final*. He never recognised the existence of a human priest or priesthood as essential either to the Christian Church or the Christian ministry. His whole life was a long struggle to keep the gospel free from the incipient priestcraft and ceremonialism of his time. *Paul was not a priest, but a man*, a man with the noblest heart that ever beat, and the Christianity he preached was not an ecclesiastical system, but a spiritual

life ; begotten by faith in Christ, and fed from the living springs of His eternal Power and Grace. The true succession in the Christian ministry is not a mechanical thing that may be absolutely void of accompanying grace, but a succession of holy men and women, who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, and seeking neither lands nor laurels, neither fame nor fortune, have gone forth in His Name and for His sake to seek and to save that which was lost.

James Thorne and James Way, Samuel Crocker, Samuel Pollard, William Reed, William Bailey, and Billy Bray were in that succession ; and I can covet for you, my dear brothers, no higher honour than that you may be counted worthy to have a place in such a succession. Unrecognised I know it is in some ecclesiastical circles on earth, but if I know anything of the spirit and the genius of the New Testament, it is most fully honoured and recognised in heaven.

We believe that you have received your ministry from the Lord Jesus ; that at His pierced feet you have obtained not only the assurance of your own salvation, but the commission to preach the glad Gospel of salvation to men. He Himself has breathed upon you the Spirit of life and power. *These are your holy orders*—none holier can there be—and possessing them, you are as truly the ministers of Jesus Christ as the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope of Rome.

And as you have received your ministry from the Lord Jesus, so at His feet, when the work of life is done, you must lay it down, and the

faithful or unfaithful years will determine the verdict of the Great Day. The voice from the throne says: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

II. *Our Ministry is a Ministry of Testimony.*

"To testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." The word testify is synonymous with the word witness. Mr Jowett, in his published address on preaching, says that behind the one word "preacher" of the New Testament Scriptures there are half a dozen original words, each with its own distinctive suggestion, each contributing its own item of colour to the designation of the mighty office. "The preacher is a herald, a logician, an evangelist, a conversationalist," says Mr Jowett. Yes, and I must add, *a witness*—a testifier of that which he has himself seen and known of the deep and hidden things of God. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," said Jesus to the first Apostles; and to Paul the message was: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of those things which thou hast seen and in the which I will appear unto thee."

The strength of the apostolic testimony was its certitude. "We have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eye-witnesses of His

majesty and saw His glory when we were with Him in the Holy Mount." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." This is the key-note of all New Testament music. The early Christians spoke with the triumphant tone of men who knew their feet were upon the rock, to whom the verities of the Gospel were assured and certain experiences. And when the apostles, who were the witnesses of the historic facts of the Christian religion, passed out of sight, they were succeeded by generations of believers who had never seen the Lord in the flesh, but who declared they knew by certain knowledge that Christ was living still—living in them and they in Him.

The emphasis of *faith* increased with the passing of the years; the historic facts were not forgotten or forsaken, but there was built up upon them a succession of penitents and saints, who, these nineteen centuries past, have declared that they have known Christ for themselves as the Lord and Saviour of men. The assailants of Christianity have to destroy the accumulated testimony and witness of all the Christian centuries before they can touch the foundational truths on which that witness is based.

This is the secret of all true preaching power to-day; no fancied line of connection with the historic past, but a present and living fellowship of faith in Christ, by the Holy Spirit who inspires in us the joyful assurance—"We know."

Unless your teaching and preaching have the ring of personal conviction and experience it will be but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling

cymbal." The most effectual weapons you can wield are those forged in the fires of your own experience. Melancthon said that the secret of Luther's power was that his words were born not on his lips but *in his soul*.

"Thyself the truth must know
If thou the truth wouldest teach,
Thy heart must overflow
If thou another's heart would reach.
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech.

The Gospel we preach is a Gospel of Salvation—a Gospel of Grace that enlightens, renews, cleanses from sin, recreates the moral nature in the image of God! You cannot preach that Gospel unless within your own heart you know its double cure.

The awful possibility is that you may be preachers in name, without the spirit that makes the preacher; that preaching may become perfunctory and unreal, and consequently powerless:

"Once," it has been said, "a Judas was used as an apostle, but who would be a Judas? Once in history, ravens took food to a famishing prophet, but it is not the rule for ravens to do work like that. Once in our own day there was an engine-driver who from colour-blindness could not distinguish between the signals of red, white and green. For a time the trains went all right, but at length there came the inevitable catastrophe. Once now and then a man may transmit the Gospel telegram and know no more about it than the telegraph wire knows

about the message it conveys. You may be dead to Christ and yet preach Christ. According to an old legend there is a certain hour in the year when the church bells of an old village in Normandy are rung by dead people. As they swing in the darkness and peal through the silence of the night, the listeners tremble to think that only dead hands touch the ropes and only dead ringers ring."

So possible is it that dead souls may be ringing the music of salvation themselves uncharmed, unmoved, unsaved. The name of Christ has often been dishonoured and His Church brought to shame by the graceless ministry of men who have never loved Him well, or else have lost the love they had.

Whatever talents and gifts you possess—and the Christian ministry demands the richest properties of mind and heart—with the gift there must be the grace that sanctifies, or the gift itself will be in vain. Nothing can atone for the absence of personal purity of heart, sanctity of character and devotion of life. Keep yourselves in the love of God, your spirit in such sensitive contact with the Infinite Spirit, your vision of the heavenly realities so clear and bright, your speech so seasoned with grace, that men seeing you and hearing you shall be constrained to say of you as was said of the first apostles, "These men have been with Jesus."

III. Our Ministry is Divinely inspired and ordered.

To this the Apostle bears witness in accompanying words—"And now behold I go bound

in *the Spirit* unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." " *I go.*" It is something to say this. Many have reached the position you occupy to-day, but have gone no further. They mistook the starting-point for the goal: they have become ministers on sufferance, men tolerated, rather than men whose ministry has been an ever-enlarging sphere of delight to themselves and to the people.

" *I go bound in the Spirit*" is a stronger word still. The word is parallel with that used of Jesus when the evangelist says of Him, " He was *driven of the Spirit.*" From the moment of His anointing the movements of Jesus were not His own; He was impelled by the Spirit which now filled Him without measure, and His servants who share the same anointing are governed by the same impulse. Paul started on his great missionary journeys not knowing whither he went. At one time he sees in vision a man of Macedonia, and hears the pathetic call, " Come over and help us." And while we should be wondering as to the reality of the vision, or sending to the Missionary Committee for help, Paul was half way there. " Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them." Oh that you could put the *electric energy of Paul's immediateness* into your ministry. Suffering may await you, and hot, hard days of toil, but *failure!* NEVER!

"He assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not." He was "Forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Gospel in Asia." He is "bound in the Spirit." So the great and effectual doors were opened for his entrance, and his loving lips declared to men everywhere the Gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ.

The same fact is true of the first apostles and disciples. Their actual ministry did not begin till they were "filled with the Holy Ghost." They were the companions of Christ during the three eventful years of his public ministry; they had seen the mighty works which He did; and had avowed their faith in Him. They had seen Him after His resurrection, and they knew Him by the print of the nails in His hand. But a new power was needed—new, at any rate in the measure of its influence, ere they can become the effective witnesses of the Gospel. That power came upon them with the coming of the Holy Spirit; and He Himself is the Power for Service. The power that is to make your ministry effective in the salvation of men is not something delegated by the Spirit; it is the Spirit Himself. "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." "Ye know," says St Peter, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Was this necessary for Jesus, the Holy Lamb

of God? Then the conclusion is irresistible, that if we are to be His witnesses, His ministers and ambassadors, we must share not only His fellowship of service, but His anointing of power. We must share both the passion and the power of His ministry.

The Passion! Have you been with Him in the garden and tasted one drop of His bitter cup? Have you passed through the great struggle of self-surrender, till you were able to say—"My Lord, not my will but Thine be done"? Have you climbed the mournful mountain with any strain of the cross's weight upon you? Have you stretched yourself upon the cross until you could say, "I have been crucified with Christ."

Then, the darkness past and the victory won, it is your gracious privilege to share with Him the power and glory of His risen life, and the fulness of that Spirit—now so freely and fully given because Jesus has entered into His glory. Yield yourself to His full possession. Hold out your arms to be bound with His chain, for His chains are like sails to a ship or wings to a bird.

I say to you to-night, with all the earnestness I can command, and with a deep longing that I could begin my own ministry again, Seek that gift, that gift of the Spirit, the gift of Power. Seek it prayerfully, seek it reverently, seek it until it is yours. For that which will make your ministry a ministry of life and salvation is not in the natural powers you possess, not in anything you may acquire, not even in the

Gospel you preach ; but in the power in which you preach it, the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. What though you have a whole Gospel to preach, if you have not the Spirit in which to preach it ! But with your own souls surcharged with boundless energy divine you shall both save yourselves and them that hear you.

Go then ! From this hour go forward to the wider issues of your ministry ! Go, bound in the Spirit, and you shall find, as Cromwell once said, that you can never go so safely and so securely as when you don't know where you are going at all.

IV. *Our Ministry is fixed in its consecration and resolve.*

“ But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.”

One fixed, tenacious, unalterable purpose held possession of the great Apostle's heart. To accomplish his course—to fulfil to its utmost detail and outline the ministry with which he had been entrusted—that was the goal he kept in sight ; and from the straight road thither nothing had power to turn him aside. The rendering of the Revised Version is even more emphatic. “ I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, in comparison of accomplishing my course.” *Life* is regarded by men as of all things the most precious. Skin for skin, all that a man hath, will he give for

his life! But here was a man to whom life—this mortal life—was a secondary thing, and held subordinate to the primal demand of faithfulness. Dearer than life was honour, fidelity, duty. He could die, but he could not turn aside either to the right or to the left; he could climb the hill of sacrifice, but he could not descend to the compromise and capitulation of faith, for the highest prizes the world had to bestow.

He was following in the very footsteps of his Divine Master, who, when He had once set His face towards Jerusalem, went thither with steady step, and neither friends could retard nor foes hasten his footsteps. “I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

He embraced the Cross ere He reached it. His blood was shed before the soldiers pierced His side. He loved us and gave Himself for us. He laid down His life because He would lay it down. He was straitened in Himself till His baptism was accomplished.

The Holy Ghost witnessed, said Paul, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. But “none of these things move me.”

Imprisonments, stonings, stripes, tumults, pains, perils, persecutions already lay behind. Experiences of a similar kind awaited him, but amidst all he is steadfast, unmovable. His life is like the river which, born of a thousand rills among the mountains, gathers to itself tributary after tributary, widens and deepens as it flows,

until it becomes wide and deep enough to bear upon its bosom the stately ships, and still rolls on in resistless flood, cutting an ever-deepening channel, and sweeping before it every obstacle that would impede its progress, to pour its waters into the ocean.

And Paul is not alone. In the long history of the Christian Church, in every age, there have been men and women too who, amid the same experiences of tribulation, have manifested the same resolute and invincible courage.

Luther, standing upon the firm ground of faith, as he had discovered it in Christ, exclaimed before the august assembly at Worms, "Here I stand, I can do no other, so God help me." The prayers of John Knox were feared by Queen Mary more than an army of ten thousand men, and when he was laid in his grave the Earl of Morton, standing over it, said, "There lies he who never feared the face of man."

Of these men, and such as they, it were not too much to say, that you could easier turn the river backward in its channel, you could easier alter the course of the sun in the heavens, than you could turn them aside from the path of loyal allegiance to Christ and of conscientious service for His Kingdom.

The Scriptures speak of things that cannot be shaken—things basal—foundational, that will stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. So are there unshakable men who make their home among the unshakable things. My brothers, *be of their number*. I call you to the

heights of a resolute and unalterable purpose. I cannot promise you exemption from difficulty, or pain, or sorrow, or trial. *I would not if I could.* Bonds and afflictions may await you in every Circuit, and your faith may be ofttimes tried as by fire, but the trial of faith is the test of faith, and the test of faith is the strengthening of faith. The trials that test character, strengthen it. As gold is tried by fire, so the heart must be tried by pain.

But let nothing move you from the hope of the Gospel in the ministry which is now committed to you.

“To accomplish your course!” That is now your one and only aim!

I remind you of a message, the last words that fell from the lips of John Gough, ere his sudden call away: “Young men, keep your record clean!” Keep it, unstained, untarnished, unspotted from the world. Suffer no secretly-cherished idols to usurp the Redeemer’s throne. Let no earth-born cloud mar the brightness of His face. Let nothing come between you and your God, nor suffer any lower aims or motives to thwart the one and single purpose of your life.

The sunset hour came to Paul, the old warrior saint, when seamed with the scars of a thousand conflicts, and crowned with the laurels of a thousand victories, he passed the last milestone on the journey. “I am now ready to be offered.” He was like the victim at the heathen altar on whose head the oil and wine had been poured, and thus doomed to be sacrificed. The axe was ready, the block was ready. He counts not his

life dear to him in comparison of accomplishing his course. The word spoken on the Melita shore is now to be put to the test, and he is not found wanting. As one who hastens to Coronation honours and banquetings, he writes : "The hour of my departure is at hand." And this is the light that gilds the western sky. "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have *finished my course.*"

My Brethren, you have already begun to store up memories that will hallow or haunt the distant years. Day will follow day in swift succession. Do not wait for some great opportunity to arise, but use the opportunity that is at hand. You will only be on life's great occasions what you are on its ordinary occasions. He only that is faithful in that which is least, will be entrusted with much.

And whatever your sphere, however great your gifts or capacities, the one thing for you is to be faithful—faithful unto death. It is required in stewards, and especially in the stewards of the mysteries of God, that a man be found *faithful.*

Amid all the sights that dazzle, and the tempting sounds that would allure you from your high task, let your watchword be : "None of these things move me, neither hold I my life of any account, in comparison of accomplishing my course.

V. *Our Ministry to be effective in the highest sense, must be sympathetic and compassionate.*

Listen to Paul's timely and tender recital of his ministry at Ephesus : "Ye know, from the

day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with *many tears* and temptations. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day *with tears*.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was a ministry bedewed with tears. He did not look down from some supernal height on the sin and sorrow of men. He made Himself one with us. He entered into our nature. “In all our afflictions he was afflicted.” When He wept with the broken-hearted sisters of Bethany at the grave-side of their brother; when looking upon the city He loved, He wept over it; He revealed a tender sympathy, which is not only one of the finest faculties of humanity, but one of the most precious perfections of Deity itself. And Paul had drank so deeply of the Spirit of Christ that he shared in an intense degree the same sympathy with men, the same love for them, the same deep compassion and yearning over them. “*With tears.*”

My brethren, you *must feel*, and *feel intensely*. You must possess SOUL. You will move others when you are moved yourself, and you will find an entrance into other hearts as you share sympathetically their needs and sorrows, their doubts and fears.

It will cost you something! There is no love without pain, and the greater the love the greater the pain.

Mr Jowett has expressed what many minis-

ters have felt at the beginning of the ministry : the fear that the constant contact with the sorrows and sufferings of mankind would impose such a strain upon physical and mental resources that it would soon become unbearable. He speaks of being unable to read at first the Burial Service without deep emotion. He has also pointed out the subtle danger that by familiarity with these things, the fine edge of sensitive feeling may become worn away and the very capacity for tears be lost. This, I venture to say to you, is *your peril*. Your ministry must not only bear fruit, but that fruit must bear the rich bloom of spiritual sensitiveness.

You must *live amongst your people* as their friend and counsellor. Make their interests your own. Have a special care for the sick and poor and needy ; and in times of trouble, when the shadows of bereavement fall, and the curtains are drawn, and the house is a house of mourning, let your presence be there to afford comfort and consolation. And even when words are impossible, the tear on your cheek, the hand-clasp of a brother, the practical evidence of your care, will do more than a thousand sermons to win their friendship and their confidence.

Above all ! *Yearn for souls.* Woo them to the Saviour's feet.

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity, from sin and the grave,
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save !”

And get so near to Him yourself, that the very tone of His voice shall be in your own, and the same tender sympathy that thrilled His soul shall dwell in yours. So shall you be Christ's to men in your measure. You shall re-incarnate in your own mortal bodies, in your ministry among men, the very spirit and life of Christ Himself.

And there is no greater word than this : "As He is, so are ye in this world." Some men will never see the face of Christ unless they see Him in you, nor ever be drawn to Him unless you draw them.

VI. And lastly our ministry should be distinguished by its unselfish devotion.

Paul could humbly claim that he had coveted no man's gold or silver or apparel. "Yea, ye yourselves also know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me."

And as if in the burning presence of the great white throne, he makes the solemn asseveration, "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men."

If men suspect you of selfish aims and motives, your ministry is despoiled of its power over them, and you must give no ground for the suspicion. Let there be no inconsistency between your preaching and your living. Your life is your greatest sermon. To preach well is a laudable ambition, to live well is a higher ambition still, and so to preach and to live as to earn the approbation of Christ, and to impress and save men is the highest ambition of all.

Think not of yourselves. Let the "egoist" within you be nailed to the Cross of Christ. Hold not your life of any account in comparison of accomplishing your course.

When James Guthrie, one of the Covenanting martyrs, ascended the scaffold to die, he declared he had often felt greater fear in ascending the pulpit to preach, and with his last breath he exclaimed, "I take God to witness that I would not exchange this scaffold for the mitre or throne of the greatest prelate in Britain."

The martyrs of every age have rejoiced to suffer and to die. They sealed their testimony with their blood. I am glad the martyr spirit lives to-day. I rejoice that one of your number, to vindicate the lordship of conscience, has suffered the ignominy of imprisonment, and I am persuaded that had the same opportunity been afforded, you would each have shown the same pluck and courage and steadfast devotion to principles.

You are Ministers of the Protestant faith.

The central thesis of that faith is that salvation is by grace, the free grace of God in Christ, and not by sacraments. Between the sacerdotalism of the Roman and Anglican priesthood, and the evangelical doctrines of the Protestant faith, there is a great gulf fixed. And there is no passage over except by renunciation of the sacred principles for which your fathers lived and fought and bled. Yield not a hair's-breadth where those principles are at stake.

The day has come for the resolute defence of the faith, even at the cost of life itself, should that eost be demanded.

You are Ministers of a Church that is glad to take its place among the free evangelical Churches of this land in the great work of the evangelisation of the people, and in upholding the banners of spiritual freedom and of national righteousness.

You are members of a *Methodist Church*, the glory of which is its evangelical fervour, its intense passion for the salvation of men ; and I pray that your ministry may add new chapters of triumph to its history, and that a multitude of souls may be the crown and joy of your rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

“ By the heaven that shineth o'er you,
By the soul's uncounted worth ;
By the soul that Jesus bore you,
By the human loves of earth.
By the moments speeding faster
To the shore as yet untrod,
By the dread of worse disaster,
By the Holy Name of God !
Forward ! men, beloved of Heaven,
Wave this white device on high,
Rest not till this light is given,
Hope of every darkened sky.
Go where none have gone besides you,
Go to homes of dark despair.
Men implore you, Christ will guide you,
Win your spurs of knighthood there.”

PRACTICAL HOLINESS

“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, *Holiness unto the Lord.*”—ZECHARIAH xiv. 20.

HOLINESS unto the Lord! This dedicatory inscription is printed, not in ordinary type, but in large capitals, both in the text and in almost every instance where it occurs throughout the sacred Scriptures. It stands out with a distinctness all its own—the illuminated text of the Bible. So clear is the signet that the dim eyes of old age require no spectacles to see it. Up to the time of the prophet's writing, it had only appeared on the mitre of the Jewish high priest. “They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, Holiness unto the Lord.” This was the crowning glory of the priest's attire. It expressed at once the sanctity of the office which he held, and his own dedication to the service of God.

It also expressed the whole intent and purpose of Judaism. What meant the Tabernacle, and afterward the Temple with its rich and costly adornments, its outer and inner courts, its Holy of Holies, its ark and mercy-seat and winged cherubim, its ministering priests, its gorgeous ritual, its ceaseless sacrifice of blood, its ever-burning altar-flame? What meant it

all? The answer is, Holiness unto the Lord. Judaism laboured to express in sign and symbol the august holiness of God and the required holiness of His people.

Now Judaism is gone. Its death-knell was rung upon the Cross in the dying words of Jesus, "It is finished." Human priests and priesthoods are no more. Aaron is gone and all his successors. They are no longer needed. You can put out all your candles when the sun is risen. "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." We want no other; any other is an intrusion.

So with all the ceremonials of Judaism. Fires and sacrifices, robes and crowns, mitres and breastplates: they are worn-out things that befitted the childhood of the world and the childhood of religion. "We are no more children pleased with stones that are precious, and rubies that are lustrous, and bells that are resonant; we are no longer in that infantile place in God's creation. We have left the emblematic, the symbolic, the titular, and the initial." We have come into higher services and loftier realms of life. In the Gospel of Jesus "a character is revealed that is far above rubies, a spirit that outshines the diamond, and a holiness of which star and sun and unstained snow are but imperfect emblems."

All that Judaism stood for in letter and symbol is revealed in clearer, fuller light in the character, the life, and work of Jesus Christ our Lord: "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the

glory that excelleth." The dawn has ripened into day, and for the day, as for the dawn, there is the same great word, Holiness unto the Lord, in all the richer and larger fulfilments of it which are made possible in Christ.

It was of that larger fulfilment the prophet was thinking when he wrote : "On THAT day—the day of the Lord—there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord." Hitherto the dedication had appeared on the mitre of the high priest alone ; henceforth it should be written on every common thing. "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar ; yea, every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts."

The prophecy points to a consummation which abolishes the distinction between things sacred and secular. And it does this, as Dr Dods has pointed out in his "Studies in Zechariah," not by making everything secular, but by making everything sacred. "Holiness unto the Lord" is not to be obliterated from the high priest's frontlet, so that he might feel as little solemnised when putting on his mitre and entering the holiest of all, as if he were going into his stable to put the collar on his horse ; but when he puts the collar on his horse and goes out to his day's work or his day's recreation, he is to be as truly and lovingly at one with God as when, with sacrifice and incense and priestly garments, he goes into the Holy of Holies.

We shall still need our Sabbath days as long as we are in this mortal state, but in a very real sense every day is now a Sabbath day ; we

shall still observe the sacramental feast, and as often as we do it, "shew forth the Lord's death till He come"; but every meal is now a sacrament; we shall still build our churches and gather in them for the worship and service of God; but "every place to the consecrated spirit is hallowed ground." The praying soul carries its own temple and altar with it.

Life is no longer a thing of compartments and divisions, each part standing by itself as if it had no affinity with the other; but, being filled and suffused with the spirit of grace, is lifted into a gracious unity, and all its wide reaches, down even to the commonest detail, stamped with a common sacredness.

"On the bells of the horses."

"Our words are bells, our purposes are bells, our actions are bells." On them all must be written, and forth from them all must ring in sweet and musical chime, "Holiness unto the Lord."

Let me ask you to think of this high experience in its inner and outer relations.

I. *The inner relation.*

Holiness must be realised within before it can be manifest without. We must be before we can do. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."

These are the ethics of Christ. He insists first on being, then doing; the experience of holiness, then the exercise of it; the new creature, then the new life. "Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God."

“God will not put His new wine into old bottles. He never prints His love upon the heart until it is renewed by evangelical meltings ; and the same seal that prints His love prints His image too. A flinty heart will not take the seal of the Spirit ; the sparkling white stone is not given till the heart of stone be taken away. The new name is not given till the new creature be framed ; and though the outward sun with liberal and undistinguishing beam shines both on the good and the bad, yet the light of God’s countenance is only lifted on those who are the apples of His eye.”

The psalmist recognises this to be the true order of grace in the tear-bedewed prayer of the fifty-first psalm : “Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. THEN will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.”

This, therefore, is my first question to-day : Brother, is thine heart right ? Are the inner springs of the moral nature renewed and cleansed ?

Many systems of human reform work from without to within, and some, I fear, have no *within* at all ; but the religion of Jesus Christ works from within to without. It establishes the throne of righteousness in the regenerated heart of man, and from that centre “exerts its healing reign,” until every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and every realm and province of human thought and activity are subjugated to the authority and rule of Jesus Christ.

It is said of Sir Walter Raleigh that when he had laid his head upon the block, he was asked by the executioner whether it lay right or not; whereupon with the calmness of a hero and the faith of a Christian, he replied, "It matters little how the head lies providing the heart be right?"

And so I say to-day. It matters not to me what your name or circumstance, or what the conditions amid which your life is spent; if the Kingdom of God be set up within you, it will assimilate all outward things to itself.

And we are called to purity of heart.

"What is our calling's glorious hope,
But inward holiness?"

It is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The grace that brings unto us salvation does not end with the forgiveness of sin, or the acquittal from charge of guilt; it renews, cleanses, purifies. The mystery of godliness is realised. "Christ in you, the Hope of Glory" :

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin
And sets the prisoner free."

Sin has become abhorrent now, righteousness is loved for its own sake; and from one degree of blessedness to another, "from glory unto glory," is the liberated spirit led, even by the Spirit of the Lord. Granted this, and "Holiness unto the Lord" will be written on the *affections*. Love is the regnant passion of the holy nature. It hallows to itself every pure

affection. It is the very pith and marrow of the Christian Gospel. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt LOVE."

It will be written also on the *motives*. Motive is the moral quality of action. The judgment of God is based, not on the exterior of an act, however fair it may seem to be, but upon its interior motive. The poor widow in the Gospel story, though she only cast into the treasury "two mites which make a farthing," did cast more in than many that were rich. "For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

The Lord, who sat over against the treasury, weighed not the gift, but the motive of the gift. He sees what is behind and within. He knows what we would do if we could. Yes! and He also knows what we could do if we would.

"Whatsoever therefore ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." That is the one sanctifying motive that lifts all into the loftiness of an exalted and accepted service. And not further to dwell upon the several moral faculties, it is enough to say that upon "all within" the dedication must be inscribed "Holiness unto the Lord."

II. *The outer relation.*

Engraved upon the heart, it is next to be engraved upon all that the heart goes out into through the brain and the hand of man,—"On the plates of gold our age of enterprise is digging up from mines and beating into currency, on bales of merchandise and books of account, on

the tools and bench of every handicraft, on your weights and measures, on pen and plough and pulpit, on the doorposts of your houses and the walls of your chambers, on cradle and playthings and school-books, on the locomotives of enterprise and the ships of navigation, on the galleries of art and the treasures of literature, on all of man's inventing and building, all of his using and enjoying ; for all are so many trusts in a sacred stewardship for which the Lord, when He cometh, shall demand an account. Holiness was meant for everyday use. It is home-made and home-worn. Its exercise hardens the bone and strengthens the muscle. It is the body of character. It is religion shining. It is the candle lit, and not hid under a bushel, but giving light to all that are in the house. It is religious principle put into motion. It is the love of God sent forth into circulation, on the feet and with the hands of love to men. It is faith gone to work. It is charity coined into action. It is devotion breathing her benediction on human suffering while she rises in continual intercession to the Father of all."

Such is the holiness of the New Testament : not an ascetic seclusion from the world, not a thing of creed and form, rhapsody and sentiment, not a professionalism of office or attire, assumed for certain days and occasions, but a real, thorough, practical, and steadfast application of high Christian principle to all the cares and concerns of life.

The story is told of a domestic servant who, on being asked for some proof of her conversion,

replied : “I sweep *under the mats* now.” Well ! the Christianity that touches the commonest detail of a domestic’s life is of the genuine sort. This is the imprint of holiness on the bells of the horses.

As George Herbert quaintly puts it :—

“A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgery divine.
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
 Makes that, and th’ action fine.
This is the famous stone
 That turneth all to gold ;
For that, which God doth touch and own,
 Cannot for less be told.”

Such “holy living” will alone impress and save the world. We have had enough, and more than enough, of a religion without holiness, a cold and empty formalism. “It has gone to Church as to a sacred wardrobe, and borrowed its badges to cloak the iniquities of trade. It has said to the outcast and oppressed :—Stand by, I am holier than thou. It has separated the Church from the market, and by its hollow unreality has sharpened the spear of the scorner and sealed the sceptic’s unbelief.”

I have sometimes heard it said, Religion is religion and business is business. Away with the base lie. The whole business of life is religion, and the whole of religion is “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

I am not a Christian on Sunday and something else on Monday. Christianity is my life : all-embracing, and all-transfiguring. It is

a unity reaching from the innermost heart of motive to the outermost circumference of daily duty. All things share in the exaltation. The bells of the horses are holy unto the Lord.

This is the fulfilment of the Master's word : "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." And this shall be its immediate effect. It shall impress others. It shall testify to the reality of religion. It shall win to Christ. It is the most powerful testimony you can give.

The shining holiness of the first Apostles, of Brainerd and Eliot, of Moffatt and Paton, has made known to entire communities "the saving health of God."

John Wesley once said, "Give me a hundred men who hate nothing but sin, love none but Jesus, seek nothing but holiness, and I will turn the world upside down." Well, he did a good deal towards it. But a *hundred such men!* The Church of Christ should have them by thousands. It is said that the armies of ancient Rome often awed their enemies into surrender without drawing a sword by the splendour of their polished breastplates. Oh let the whole Church of Christ be arrayed in the armour of unsullied holiness, and her might shall be irresistible.

We often speak of the triumphs of the Church in apostolic times, of the mighty demonstrations of power in the early days of Methodism. May we not witness such days of grace again ? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened ? No ! His

love is as free, His power as omnipotent, His promises as precious as ever.

It is ours, in the renunciation of sin, and in a whole-hearted consecration, to present ourselves unto God. The act of consecration is ours. The gift of cleansing is His. Are we ready for the sacrifice?

Then, on heart and life, in large and gloomy capitals, visible from far, the dedication shall be imperishably inscribed,

“HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”

“DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST”

2 TIMOTHY iv. 5.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE LIFE OF D. L. MOODY

THE perusal of the records of Moody's life has fastened and fixed in my memory for ever this one word and thing—definiteness. Once saved himself, to the work of saving others he gave all that he was and all that he possessed with ever-increasing devotion. “This one thing I do,” like the first great evangelist, was the motto of his life. In the splendour and blessedness of it there was room for nothing else. To win a soul for Christ was a greater triumph than to conquer a world; and when, as was often the case, he was the centre of thousands enquiring their way to Zion, there was not a saint in heaven but might have envied his unutterable joy.

To begin with, he was won to Christ by the definite appeal of another. When about seventeen years of age and at work in a shoe store in Boston, he was visited by Mr Kimball, his Sunday School teacher. Mr Kimball says; “I put my hand on his shoulder and made what I afterwards felt was a very weak plea for Christ. I simply told him of Christ's love

for him and the love Christ wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there, in the back of that store in Boston, he gave himself and his life to Christ."

As a proof that no work for Christ is unrewarded, Mr Moody, some years after, was the instrument in the conversion of Mr Kimball's son by the same definiteness. "Henry, are you a Christian?" was the pointed enquiry. "No, sir, I do not think I am." And then with gentle words the Spirit-guided evangelist led the son of his old friend to the immediate acceptance and confession of Christ.

In his earliest attempts at Christian work the same definiteness appears. In the Sunday School, at his old Northfield home, he was the successful "recruiting officer," and when he entered on his business career in Chicago, his first thought was "to cast about for some definite Christian service." Having identified himself with the Plymouth Church, he at once rented a whole pew, which he guaranteed to fill. The one pew soon grew to *four*. "He would hail young men on the street corners, or visit their boarding-houses, or even call them out of saloons to share his pews, which he filled every Sunday with his strangely-assorted guests."

What a different complexion would our English churches assume if among us there were the same spirit of definite Christian enterprise. How many are content even with an

irregular attendance at the house of the Lord, while to invite another is a thing never dreamt of or attempted!

Becoming a Sunday School teacher, Mr Moody gathered his own class, a motley group of eighteen young vagrants from the streets, and ere long became the superintendent of a mission school numbering a thousand scholars.

The lesson of definiteness in soul-saving work was now burnt in upon his soul so deeply as never afterwards to be erased. One of the teachers, ill of consumption, feeling that his days were numbered, came to Mr Moody one day in great trouble. He had a class of girls, and he had not seen one of them brought to Christ. The resolve was made to pay a personal visit and make a definite appeal to each one; with the delightful result that all, without exception, sought and found the Saviour. A farewell meeting was held. "The teacher sat in the midst of his class, and talked to them, and read the fourteenth chapter of John. We tried to sing 'Blest be the tie that binds,' after which we knelt to pray. Before we rose the whole class prayed. As I went out I said to myself, 'O Lord, let me die rather than lose the blessing I have received to-night.' The next evening I went to the dépôt to say good-bye to that teacher. Just before the train started, one of the class came, and before long, without any pre-arrangement, they were all there. What a meeting that was. We tried to sing but broke down. The last we saw of the teacher was as he stood on the platform

of the rear car, his finger pointing upward, telling that class to meet him in heaven."

That experience marks an epoch in the life of the great evangelist, for from that hour he left all to follow Christ in the work of seeking and saving the lost. It was the hour of his definite consecration, not only to the work of Christ, but to Christ Himself. He gave up an income of five thousand dollars a year and went forth, leaning upon the naked arm of God, "to work and speak and think for Him," as the gracious Spirit should lead the way. Henceforth he could say:—

"Not my own—my time, my talents,
All to Jesus Christ I bring,
To be used in joyful service
For the glory of my King."

Yet another instance must be quoted which inspired him, not only with a deepened definiteness, but *immediateness* and urgency in presenting the claims of the Gospel. Preaching in Chicago, October 1871, from the text, "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ," he said, "I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the Cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus!" But ere the next Sabbath came Chicago was in the ruins of its great fire. He never met that congregation again. Years after he said, "I have never forgotten the lesson I learned that night, and that is, when I preach, to press Christ upon the people then and there, and

try to bring them to decision on the spot. I would rather have that right hand cut off than give an audience now a week to decide what to do with Jesus."

This event was also closely related both in time and effect to his subsequent experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The reception of the Spirit in Pentecostal enduement of power for his life-work was no vague and hazy thing, but a definite and actual consciousness. The place and the hour were marked, and the fruit thereof was visible to the very end. And as we follow him, whether in the happy home-circle or in his public Christian work, in his own or other lands, in the enquiry room or the pulpit, among the students at Northfield or the great crowds that thronged him in public halls, he is ever the same—a man with a definite purpose, the glory of his Redeemer; filled with a definite power, the power of the Holy Ghost; consumed with a definite passion, the immediate salvation of souls.

Now, what of ourselves? In vain are all our contemplations unless they are turned to practical account. To do the work of an evangelist, to carry the glad evangel of the Cross to men, is the common work of the whole Church of Christ in all her ministers and members. Too often the work is left to ministers alone. Better that there were no separate order of ministers at all, than that the Church should fail to realise its common obligation, "to seek and to save that which is lost." Speaking at a Sunday School Convention in 1896, Mr Moody said: "If I had

the trumpet of God and could speak to every Sunday School teacher in America, I would plead with each one to *lead at least one soul to Christ this year.*"

If I could put the same trumpet to my mouth I would send the same message, not only to every Sunday School teacher, but to every preacher and member of our churches—brother, sister, "lead at least one soul to Christ this year."

First, have a definite consciousness of your own salvation. Let it not be a mere memory or hope. Know with assurance that you are the Lord's. "He that believeth in the Son hath the witness in himself." Rest not short of that witness, and, with your own feet planted firmly on the Rock of Ages, with both hands earnestly, lift up to sure ground of safety the wrestlers with the troubled sea.

Make it a definite aim to win others for Christ. You will best keep your own candle burning as others are lit from it. Begin where you are: not waiting for some great opportunity, but seize the first that comes to hand. It may never recur. Each one has a circle of influence that no other can fill. Some wandering one "away from the tender Shepherd's care" may never be brought home unless you bring him. Remember that souls are to be *won*; and love is the all-gracious spell to cast. Mr Moody said that Henry Drummond was the most Christ-like Christian he ever knew. He lived in 1 Corinthians xiii. It is a splendid home: the best in all the world. No soul is so hardened but

it can be loved to Jesus. "Love only can the conquest win." Let there be a definite consecration to Christ for soul-winning service. Whatever strength and glory our own Bible Christian Church has had in the past century has lain in this. We are a soul-saving Church. If we are not this we are nothing. Destitute of soul-winning power, we are shorn of the locks of our strength, and the glory is gone with the vanished years. But by the blessing of God the brightest years are in store ; even the years that the locust hath eaten (and they are not a few) shall be restored. With the dawn of the new century still upon us, shall we not in a new consecration "present ourselves unto God" for service, the direct and definite service of evangelisation ?

"The world has yet to learn what God can do with one man who is whole-hearted and entirely consecrated to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ." This sentence once fell from old Mr Pennefather's lips at Mildmay. To Mr Moody, who eagerly listened, it was as a trumpet call from heaven.

The record of his life shows what God did with the great evangelist, and bright will be the crown for him to cast at the Redeemer's feet ; but what God did for Mr Moody, he is waiting and willing to do for us, each in his own order. All have not the same gifts or the same proportion of gifts, but none is giftless, and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." All that is needed is the definite dedication. Can it be withheld ? It is

the claim of a Saviour's dying love, and the crying need of a perishing world. The Lord bring us to the altar of His Cross and to the pentecostal flame. "Then shall the prey be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive delivered." "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert." The vision waits for us.

The question has often been asked, What was the secret of Mr Moody's success as an evangelist? Wherein lay his power to gather and control the crowds that thronged to hear him? Various replies have been given. Those who look from the outside have attributed it to his great natural gifts, his raciness of speech or his organising genius. But all such judgments miss the true mark. There is an inner point of view; and only from the inside can the secret be found.

Get within the man himself and you find not only an altar whereon every natural and acquired gift was laid, but that altar

AFLAME WITH DIVINE FIRE.

This is the innermost secret. He was God-possessed, God-filled, God-inspired: "Full of Faith and of the Holy Ghost." The difference between one Christian and another is simply a question of fire. To be cold is a state condemned. To be lukewarm is a state of severer condemnation still. To be hot, red hot with love kindled to the white-heat of a burning and quenchless enthusiasm is the state of grace

most dear to Christ, and most full of blessing to men. Mr Moody's own words are : " Fill the cup with incense, and load the altar with odorous wood ; but *fire* is still needed to send out fragrance."

One of the epoch-making days of Mr Moody's life was that on which he received the fire-baptism. His Pentecost was as real and memorable as that of the First Apostles ; and while, up to this time, he had not been without blessing either in himself or his work, that blessing was now increased a thousand-fold. He had received his power for service, and to the praise of God be it said, that power abode upon him and increased in measure even to the end.

Mr Moody had been for some years a Christian, and for some time an evangelist before he knew or even understood the necessity of a fuller spiritual equipment, but he was being gradually and surely led by the Spirit to its full possession. More and more he felt the sense of his own unfitness for the great work to which God had called him. His interest was further aroused by two godly women who used to sit in the front seat of services held in Chicago. At the close they would say, " We have been praying for you." " Why don't you pray for the people ? " Mr Moody would say. " Because you need the power of the Spirit," was the reply.

An unchastened spirit would have resented this as a piece of presumption, but he had not so learned Christ. He was willing to be taught.

One of the most beautiful features of his character was his humble, teachable spirit. He would gladly sit at the feet of any who could instruct him in the deep things of God. How many of us are ready for the necessary humbling? It must be. It is a necessary process. Before the iron can take the shape of the mould it must be melted down. The same fire that purifies and radiates must first liquefy. Then, with all resistance to the Divine Will taken away, we receive the form of the Divine mould.

A dear friend of mine said, concerning the time of his full salvation, that he felt like a *kid glove* that could be doubled up anyhow.

Desire—acquiescence—possession. These are the three stages of the soul's great discovery.

Let us hear Mr Moody's own story of the sacred time as he knew and felt it. Like the place around the burning bush in the desert of Horeb, it is holy ground. None may tread it to-day without reverent spirit and hushed footfall.

"I thought I had power. I had the largest congregation in Chicago, and there were many conversions. I was in a sense satisfied. But right along those two godly women kept praying for me, and their earnest talk about anointing for special service set me thinking. I asked them to come and talk with me, and they poured out their hearts in prayer that I might receive the filling of the Holy Ghost. There came a great hunger into my soul. I did not know what it was. I began to cry out as I never did before. I really felt that I did not

want to live if I could not have this power for service."

At this juncture the great fire took place which reduced Chicago to ashes, and Mr Moody's church along with it. He started off to collect funds for the building of a new church. "But," he afterwards said, in relating the experience of that eventful time, "my heart was not in the work of begging. I could not appeal. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York—oh, what a day—I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermon was not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world—it would be but as the small dust of the balance."

Dr G. A. Smith suggests that probably the prophet Isaiah never meant to have told the story of his consecration as related in chapter vi. of his prophecy, but that he found, as years went on, he had need to fall back upon it, and to rest upon it, before God and men, the validity of his prophetic call. So we have it, this Holy of Holies in the great book: the vision of God, the dazzling brightness of His throne, the chanting of the seraphim, the

prophet's prostration and confession, and the fire-touch that hallowed both lips and life to the glory of his Lord. And glad are we that this prophet of the nineteenth century has laid bare before every other soul the thrilling story of his own.

For what God did for Isaiah in ages long since, and what He did for Dwight L. Moody in recent years, He is willing and waiting to do for all believers. To be "filled with the Spirit" is both a command and a promise, and if it be not commonly realised it is because of a common unbelief. Concerning the promise of the Spirit, in his rich anointing grace for service (and no true service is possible without it), our ascended Lord is as truly saying to us as to the blind men waiting for sight—"According to your faith, be it unto you," "Whatsoever ye desire . . . shall be granted." Oh what boundless possibilities of triumph await the Church of Christ when in all her members she realises her full inheritance in the Holy Ghost!

That Mr Moody's baptism of power was no mere emotional excitement is abundantly proved by his subsequent life and work. It made him all the man that he was, and the saint that he became, and has left its shining impress upon all that he did. Let us notice the relation of the power and the service as exemplified in him.

THE SPHERE MARKED OUT.

The same Spirit that fills with power for service appoints the service. "For as many as

are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." The leading is the evidence of the sonship. When he began his evangelistic work he had no knowledge whereunto this would grow; but the use of one opportunity opened the door for another, and so on and on, until on both sides of the Atlantic his name was on every lip, and thousands were glorifying God in him who had become the instrument of their salvation. The permanent evangelistic and educational Institutions that will ever be associated with his name were founded by him in obedience to the leading of the Spirit. He had the ear of the people because he had the ear of God. He lived, listening to the Divine voice. When it called, he followed without questioning. Do not then be anxious about the sphere of your service. Only "be filled with the Spirit," and you shall but have to follow where He leads. The Spirit-filled is the Spirit-led life. Was this true of Moody? Was it true of the first apostles, of the reformers, of the founders and fathers of Methodism and of our own Church? It is as true to-day,

"The fire Divine their steps that led
Still goeth bright before us;
The Heavenly Shield around them spread
Is still high holden o'er us."

SOUL-WINNING WISDOM.

"He that winneth souls is wise." "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of *wisdom*." I have already said that the one end of Mr Moody's life, to which every-

thing was subordinated, was the winning of souls to Christ. For this highest, holiest work, what wisdom is needed! And he found it in the same Spirit that filled and led him. The prophetic promise, which was first of all and most fully realised in Christ, was his experience also in large measure. His educational equipment was very incomplete. He had no College or University training. When some one said to him, "You have no grammar," he said, "Well, I wish you with your grammar would try to save men as well as I am trying to do without it."

But there is a higher wisdom than that of the schools, and his insight into the Word of God—the *One Book* to him—as well as his power of utterance in proclaiming its saving truth, can only be understood as you remember that he was taught of the Spirit. He knew by revelation of the Spirit in the Word.

No man was more unlikely than he, from an educational standpoint, to reach and impress the undergraduates of an English University, yet when he stood before hundreds of them at Oxford he commanded both their intellects and their hearts. At first, met with insolence and derision, he soon quelled their prejudice. Dr Horton, who was present, says: "He just spoke to them as he would have spoken to a number of London costermongers, and a spell fell upon the audience which no man could resist. He told those young men of the sins which were killing them, he told them of the Saviour who could save them, and there were very few that were unmoved, and those few

that were unmoved at the beginning could not resist at the end." As the result the captain of the University cricket eleven became a devout and earnest Christian, and many others with him. Among the choicest gifts of the Spirit is the power to win others to Christ. This our evangelist possessed in no ordinary degree, but there is not a single believer anywhere but may share in its joy and honour.

ABOVE THE WORLD.

His conscious power in God lifted him above the world. He loved the world of nature and the world of men ; but the world, in the New Testament sense, of an organised and godless society, was ever beneath his feet. No more disinterested man ever lived. He might have made a worldly fortune by the sale of the hymn-books used at his mission services, but not a penny of it would he touch, and the great profit of their sale is still sacredly devoted to the work of God.

He was lifted above the judgment of men or any obsequious regard for persons of high social distinction. He only knew man as man. Whether peers or peasants listened to him, he had one and the same message, and it is a tribute to his spiritual greatness that the rich and the poor alike loved him as the messenger of God to their souls. Lord Cairns said of him, "The simplicity of that man's preaching, the clear manner in which he sets forth salvation by Christ, is to me the most striking and the most delightful thing I ever knew in my life."

Like him, let us live our life as "in the great Task-Master's eye," and whether the world smile or frown will be a thing indifferent. When the prophet Micah could say, "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord," he was only conscious of the message he had to deliver; and when St Paul beheld the judgment seat of Christ he could write, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us."

SANCTIFIED NATURALNESS.

Christianity is a supernatural religion, but it is beautifully natural. It has no set face for special occasions. It is not put on and off with best suits of clothes.

It is not an external appendage. It is our *Life*; and if the life be within us it will live itself as naturally as the organs of a healthy body. The root-idea of the word holiness is wholeness, healthiness. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Life and Health.

Nothing is more charming in these records than the naturalness of Mr Moody's piety, *especially at home*. Bright and happy in his public work, he was, if possible, brighter and happier still at home. How he loved his mother, his wife, his children and grandchildren. The sweet and tender relations of the home-circle were sanctified to a degree of bliss only less sacred than the Home-Land itself. It is a natural result, as well as an indication of Divine Providence, that his mantle has fallen

on his eldest son, who is treading in his father's steps and perpetuating his work.

There is no more un-Christian idea than that which would separate our life into compartments and label them sacred and secular. The presence of the Spirit transfigures all and lifts all into the loftiness of an exalted service.

PEACE IN LIFE AND DEATH.

Mr Moody, like all of us, had his great trials and sorrows, but he dwelt in the inner calm of God's perfect peace. When the shaft of the s.s. *Spree* broke in mid-Atlantic, it was Mr Moody who knelt among the affrighted passengers and calmed their fears. He said of that time: "There was not a single sceptic on board then." The last hour was in keeping with all the hours that went before, only that the river which had sometimes been a rapid and rushing stream had now deepened into tranquillity with not a ripple on its breast as it entered the ocean. "Earth recedes, heaven opens before us." "If this is death it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me and I must go. This is my Coronation Day."

Thus he passed to his throne and crown.

Who will, in the strength of grace, resolve to follow his example? Will you make his Saviour yours? Are you willing to yield up heart and life to the one work of saving others?

Then you may claim the same enduement of power, share in the same holy service and the same glorious reward.

WHY WE ARE NONCONFORMISTS

"I believed and therefore have I spoken ; we also believe and therefore speak."—2 CORINTHIANS iv. 13.

I.—THE JUSTIFICATION OF HISTORY.

A NONCONFORMIST, it need hardly be remarked, is one who does not conform to a State-established Church. The name was originally applied to those clergymen who were ejected from their livings by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Let us first travel back in thought to that momentous period in English history. The palmy days of the Commonwealth were over. Oliver Cromwell, its great Protector, was dead, and Charles II. restored to the throne. He was crowned in London on the 29th of May 1660. Fatal day for Britain's unhappy realms, it was followed by a flood of profanity and vice in England and a torrent of righteous blood in Scotland. A consummate hypocrite, a despotic tyrant, licentious and cruel was Charles II., chiehest in infamy of the notorious Stuart line. One form of Church government was no more to him than another, but because he saw it pleased the prelates of Episcopacy, which was then as now the established Church of England, he favoured a priestly sacerdotalism. It became the aim

of king and priest alike to purge the Church once for all of the Puritan element that obtained in it. The outcome of this unholy alliance was the passing of the infamous Act of Uniformity, which became law, May 29th, 1662. It is entitled : "An Act for the Uniformity of public prayers and the administration of the sacraments and other rites and ceremonies, and for establishing the form of making, ordaining and consecrating bishops, priests and deacons in the Church of England." It decreed that all who had not received episcopal ordination should be re-ordained by bishops ; that every minister should, on or before the 24th August following, being the feast of St Bartholomew, declare his unfeigned assent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, on pain of being deprived of his benefice ; that he should also abjure the Solemn League and Covenant as an unlawful oath, and swear the oath of supremacy and allegiance, and declare it to be unlawful, under any pretext whatsoever, to take up arms against his Sovereign.

Other clauses enact that "a similar declaration shall be made by any person entering upon any ecclesiastical benefice or promotion within the realm of England, and also that no one shall hold a living or discharge clerical functions without having received Episcopal ordination upon pain of £100 for each offence."

What was the result of the passing of this despotic measure ? Take the historic fact that must thrill with interest to the end of time. On August 24th, a day that numbered among

its memories one of the greatest crimes that history has ever chronicled—the massacre of St Bartholomew—

Two THOUSAND MINISTERS,

choosing to obey God rather than men, conscience rather than convenience, immediately surrendered their livings. They left their sanctuaries and parsonages and went forth, each man of them, like Abraham, the father of the faithful, not knowing whither they went; not knowing where they should find the next meal, or where they should lay their heads at night, but with a fearless trust in Him whose gracious Providence, without barn or storehouse, feeds the fowls of the air and the beasts of the forest. They were ordered to remove to a distance of twenty miles from their parishes. Their residence was not to be nearer than six miles from any cathedral town, or three miles from a royal borough, and it was made unlawful for any two of them to live together.

Amid such times and scenes as these, our Nonconformity was born, and the men who gave it birth were among the noblest of England's many noble sons.

We have a glorious ancestry, though we may not boast of mitred prelates, or gartered knights, or belted earls. Our Puritan forefathers were *men of the people*, and it is from the people as distinguished from the aristocracy, the masses as distinguished from the classes, that

the mightiest movements for intellectual and spiritual freedom have sprung.

“The greatest great men of the world have had behind them no rent-roll of wealth or head-roll of fame.” From poverty and obscurity they have risen to seven-fold splendour as burning and shining lights in the Kingdom of God.

The memory of the sacrifices they made and the persecutions they bravely endured for the sake of truth and liberty lives warmly in the heart of Nonconformist churches to-day, many of which were founded by those faithful and godly men, who, though excommunicated from the Episcopal Church, deemed themselves to be not one whit less than before, *the ministers of Jesus Christ*. Many a story of quiet heroism in that suffering time is told.

Mr Lawrence, of Barchurch, Shropshire, pointing to his wife and ten children, said he had eleven strong arguments against Nonconformity, but he answered them all by his faith in God. He sat one day under a hedge-row thinking of his hungry family, when suddenly his eye flashed and his foot sprung. What was it? The sight of a shilling in the ditch, which seemed, so he said, to have dropped straight out of Heaven.

Oliver Heywood, ejected from Coley vicarage, lived on a little stock of savings, until one day he and his children were at starvation point and with no earthly prospect of another meal. They sang at family prayer :—

“When cruse and barrel both are dry,
We still will trust the Lord most high.”

With empty purse and empty basket, their faithful old servant then set out from the house and wandered through the streets of Halifax, thinking of the famishing children, whom she loved like her own life, and wondering how God would provide for them. Returning home, one of the tradespeople of the town, standing at the door, called her in, and told her he was then casting about for a messenger to take a remittance of five guineas, just sent him from Manchester, for her master. On her arrival home with money and food, it looked like a miracle, and the father said at evening prayer: "The Lord hath not forgotten to be gracious. His word is true from the beginning. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

"Ah me," said a humble friend to Nathanael Heywood, of Ormskirk, "Many a man, nowadays, makes a great rent in his conscience, can't you make a *little nick* in yours, and stop with us?" But it was not in these men's way to make even a little nick in their consciences. They could not even do evil that good might come.¹

Though deprived of their churches, they still preached in private houses, in barns, and in fields, wherever two or three could be gathered together, and so popular did these gatherings become that the ruling party decided it was necessary to silence these ministers as well as to eject them, for it was clear that not only the piety but, to a great extent, the eloquence and

¹ Dr Stanford in "Our Lord's Prayer," quotes these instances.

learning of the Church had been driven out of it, while those appointed to fill the pulpits were ignorant, incapable, and unprincipled, "willing to hold the priest's office for a piece of bread."

Accordingly, in 1664, the Conventicle Act was passed. By this Act it was decreed that whenever and wherever five persons above those of the same household should assemble in a religious congregation, everyone should be liable to a fine of £5, or three months' imprisonment for the first offence; for the second, to a fine of £10, or imprisonment for six months; and for the third, to a fine of £100, or transportation for seven years. Henceforth, therefore, the meetings were held in secret. But, through the vigilance of informers, who were kept constantly on the watch, even these were often discovered, disturbed, and broken up, and the offenders led off to punishment.

In the following year the Five Mile Act, which struck directly at the ministers themselves, was passed. This Act demanded that no dissenting minister should come within five miles of any place where he had previously ministered, or within five miles of any city or town at all, under a penalty of £40, or six months' imprisonment. But the brave men and the brave people they led, equally courageous and earnest, were not to be deterred by any number of cruel laws or threats. Preaching still went on, and great numbers were drawn to follow Christ through His suffering servants, fearless of risk or peril to themselves.

The following summary of the various penal

Acts and disabilities under which the early Nonconformists suffered is supplied by Dr Waddington in his "Congregational History."

"No time was lost by the new monarch Charles II. and his advisers in the adoption of measures for the annihilation of Nonconformity in all its phases and degrees. Within twelve years the Parliament passed six laws for this object. The Corporation Act in 1661 (excluding from public office all who did not receive the Sacrament in the Church of England); the Act of Uniformity in 1662 (to enforce subscription to, and the strict observance of the ritual of the Church of England); an Act to suppress seditious conventicles in 1664, declaring it to be a transportable offence for more than five persons to unite in religious worship, except according to the forms of the Church of England; the Oxford, or Five Mile Act, in 1665 (banishing all Nonconformist ministers from corporate towns, *i.e.* all who had not taken the Oath of Passive Obedience); the Conventicle Act in 1670 (forbidding the attendance of any person above sixteen years of age at any religious meeting except in the Church of England, on pain of fine, imprisonment, banishment and death [death, if the transported offender returned to England]); and the Test Act in 1673 (requiring all persons in office to receive the Sacrament and to take an oath)."

During the twenty-eight terrible years that elapsed between the accession of Charles II. and the Revolution, headed and heralded by William of Orange in 1688, Mr Jeremy Whyte says that

in England alone not less than 60,000 persons suffered either fine, or imprisonment, or exile, or death. At the lowest computation, 5000 died in prison. Their pecuniary losses amounted to between twelve and fourteen millions of pounds sterling. Yet at the welcome close of the Stuart dynasty the number of Nonconformists was as many as at the beginning. The bush had burned, but it was not consumed.

A similar struggle was taking place in Scotland. Thousands there had dyed its heather-clad hills with crimson blood. The sufferings of the Scottish Covenanters were even greater than the Puritans of England. Together they stood shoulder to shoulder in this great battle for freedom, and the liberties of Christendom to-day form their imperishable monument. Of these men, we are the direct descendants and successors ; and one reason, at least, why we are Nonconformists is, that we are glad and proud to be in the line of such an apostolic succession ; unrecognised, I know, in some ecclesiastical circles on earth, but if I know anything of the spirit and genius of the New Testament, most fully honoured and recognised in Heaven. We claim to be as fully the successors of the Apostles and the ministers of Jesus Christ as the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope of Rome. Priestly hands may never have rested on our heads, priestly lips may never have pronounced over us absolution, but, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, we claim our place among the sons of God, the members of Christ's Church, and the witnesses of His grace. We

recognise no other priesthood than the mediation of our "Great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God," and the "royal priesthood" of all believers, who confess Him as their Saviour and Lord. If we have received His love in our hearts, we need no other commission to make it known, save to wait for the anointing of the Holy One, which is the promised inheritance of all believers. This is the only true and real apostolic succession ; faith in the apostolic Saviour, the possession of the apostolic spirit ; and the emulation of the apostolic self-denying example. All those holy men and women have been in its brilliant line, who, from the day of Jesus Christ until now, have gone forth in His name and for His sake "to seek and to save that which is lost."

But this position is disputed, and the Episcopal Church arrogantly claims that it is the one and only true Church of Jesus Christ, having sole authority to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments.

II.—A PROTEST AGAINST PRIESTISM.

Now this claim is either true or false. If true, we have committed grievous wrong and should humbly seek re-admission into the Episcopal fold ; if false, we are justified in maintaining our nonconformity, and in declaring such an assumption to be an unrighteous imposition upon the credulity of deluded men.

Take the question of *Historic Continuity*.

It is claimed that the bishops and priests of

the Episcopal Church are in direct line with the earliest Apostles, and therefore possessed of a certain mystic authority and Sacramental grace that other Churches have not.

The authority is based upon the *direct* line. But the facts of history make the direct line a rather crooked one. The earliest date of the Episcopal Church, as such, designated the Church of England, was during the reign of Henry VIII. Previous to that time it was, as Dean Hook in his "Lives of the Archbishops" acknowledges, "only a branch of the Church of Rome."

At a comparatively early period Christianity found its way into the British Islands, introduced, in all probability, by soldiers and traders crossing the Channel from France. During the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian, Alban, a British Christian, was martyred at Verulamium (St Albans), and others were slain for the faith of Christ whose names are unknown. It is recorded that three British Bishops attended a Council at Arles in the year 314, from which it would appear that Britain was placed on an equality with the Churches of Spain and France; but the story of these first centuries of the Christian era in England is wrapped in much obscurity. Familiar history dates from 597, when Augustine with forty monks landed in Kent, sent here by Pope Gregory I. From that time to the Reformation the Church of England, and, for that matter, the throne of England also, were under the supremacy of the Pope. "From

Augustine of Canterbury to Henry VIII. the English Church was simply a branch of a greater tree, and the sharp axe of Henry's anti-papal legislation cut off the branch. The Church *in* England was severed and excommunicated and became the Church of England. It was reconciled under Mary, but it was severed again under Elizabeth, and has remained severed ever since. It was severed not only by such State legislation as the restoration of Henry's Act of Supremacy, and of the submission of the clergy in the first year of Elizabeth's reign, but also by solemn and formal Papal Excommunication. On the 25th February 1570, Pope Pius V. drew up a Papal Bull by which he declared Elizabeth to be cut off as a minister of iniquity from the communion of the faithful, and all subjects of hers—which, of course, included all the clergy—who recognised her any longer as their sovereign, were declared to incur the same sentence as herself. On the morning of the 15th of May following, that Bull of Excommunication was found nailed against the door of the Bishop of London's palace.”¹

Yet this same Pope Pius V. who excommunicated the Church, is one of those through whom that same Church claims direct Apostolic succession. The licentious and abominable character of many of the early Popes is too notorious to need stating here; and on more than one occasion two or three were contending for the supreme seat of power, and were not very scrupulous as to the means they used in

¹ Dr John Brown.

scrambling there.¹ And these, forsooth, were the direct successors of the Holy Apostles, alone empowered to administer the ordinances of the Church of God.

But for the pain of it, it is ludicrous to reflect that the Church of England, which refuses to recognise the validity of other Churches, "is itself not recognised by the Eastern Church, either Greek or Russian; that it has been formally excommunicated by the Western, and that, therefore, the whole of the clergy, archbishops, bishops, deans, canons, vicars, down to the humblest curate, all lie to this day under the ban of excommunication; and every man of them is a schismatic in the eyes of the only Church from which he can have derived that mystic Sacramental grace which he claims to have."

But, as Dr Brown says in his "Historic Episcopate," from which we have already quoted—"There is a deeper question still. Even supposing the Anglican Church had never been separated from the Western Church, but had preserved organic unity with it, is there any reality in the claim so persistently made, that by means of bishops, and in no other way, apostolic authority and Sacramental grace have been transmitted from one generation to another? There is something monstrous, on the face of it, in the audacity of such an assertion. We have no objection to the clergy as such, and it is no pleasure to be brought into conflict with them. We know many of them to be able, cultured,

¹ See "England's Danger," by Dr Horton.

and devout. The whole Church of Christ is under eternal obligation to such men as Lightfoot, Westcott, Liddon, Farrar, and others. Our objection is to *the system* which regards them as the sole repositories and transmitters of Divine grace upon the earth, and which places the newly-fledged curate who has obtained "holy orders" in a position of authority which it denies to the most eminent and godly ministers of the Nonconformist Churches. Any theory of apostolic succession which excludes the late lamented Charles H. Spurgeon, R. W. Dale and Joseph Parker, or those living princes among preachers, Dr Maclaren and J. H. Jowett, bears upon its very front the brand of its absurdity.

"To suppose that heaven passes by all other preachers of the Gospel, however spiritual and devout, however learned and capable as teachers of men, in favour of those who have gone into the ministry through this one particular avenue, many of them as the result of the accidental possession of a family living, is to put a strain upon our power of believing in comparison with which the demand made by all other supernatural mysteries is as nothing."

It is a pleasant sign of the wider thought of this new time that some of the most enlightened men and leaders of the Episcopal Church are beginning to declare themselves in harmony with the spirit of this utterance.

Dr Perowne, during the time that he held the See of Worcester, said: "For myself I believe that there are other Churches of God

besides those which have Episcopal government. The opposite view is absolutely appalling. If God has ever plainly taught us anything by His providential administration of the Church, it is this, that no one permanent form of constitution is necessary for any branch of it, though all are not equally excellent. Therefore I say boldly with Irenæus, 'Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church.' And when I look upon the reformed Churches abroad, on the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, on the great Nonconformist bodies among ourselves, and see how they are doing Christ's work in the world, and how their work is honoured of God and stamped with the visible seal of His approval both at home and abroad; when I think of their foreign missions, when I consider the noble army of martyrs to be found in their ranks, when I remember that men who have sat at the feet of Nonconformist ministers have been brave for Christ's sake to meet the most cruel and agonising deaths, I cannot, I dare not accept the position that these Churches are not Churches at all, that their ministers are not lawful ministers, and their Sacraments not valid Sacraments; and in the name of truth and charity I plead for the recognition of a larger, deeper, truer bond of union between all Christian Churches, than any that is to be found in an external organisation."

Dr Geikie, author of "The Life of Christ," when at Barnstaple, said in effect that while many of his fellow Churchmen compared the Nonconformists to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,

who were swallowed up in the earthquake, he, for his part, believed that every faithful soul, to whatever Church belonging, passed at death into the open heavens and to the shining vision of the face of God. Dr Kennion, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, has publicly stated that he owes more to the writings of Dr Dale than to any other author; though some of his Episcopal brethren would deny the right of Dr Dale to any place among the preachers of the Gospel, because no bishop's hand had been placed on his head.

Such enlightened expressions of opinion are the dawn of a brighter day, when the exclusive theory of a Divine Episcopate shall lie with the forgotten lumber of bygone ages, and when every one who preaches the Gospel in the love and grace of Christ shall be reckoned as a brother and an equal in the glorious ministry committed, not to an order of priests, but to all saved men.

The theory, too, is as *unscriptural* as it is absurd. Certainly it is nowhere to be found in the teaching of Christ. He constantly stated that the Kingdom of God was a *spiritual* and not a mechanical force; and he does not even mention the question of Church orders or organisation. The principal basis of the ecclesiastical assumption is based in His word to one of the disciples—"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But this passage is very debatable and open to question. The most correct interpretation, in our judgment, is, that the rock on which the Church is built

is not Peter himself, *but the truth* embodied in his confession, made just before, "Thou art the Christ, the living Son of God." Paul declares that this is the foundation, and that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." With all his good qualities, the oft-erring and impetuous son of Jonas would have been a sorry foundation for the Church of God. Very soon after he had uttered the confession which has been made the basis of such a tremendous assumption, Jesus turned to him and said, "Get thee behind Me Satan, thou art an offence unto Me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men."

Are we to accept the one literally, then we must accept the other literally also, and of what material does the foundation then become composed?

Moreover, the commission to preach the Gospel was not given to any apostolic order of men. After His resurrection Jesus appeared not only to the Apostles, but to the general body of His disciples, to whom He said, "Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 21-23). Into the exegesis of this passage I do not enter. I simply note that whatever power was conferred by Christ, was conferred upon all; upon all alike and upon all equally.

The same body of believers waited in the upper room at Jerusalem for the Pentecostal Baptism, and when it came, it came not upon a few, not upon the Apostles only, but upon *all of them*. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 4). Upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went everywhere preaching the Word. All were preachers, all prophesied, all proclaimed the gospel of forgiveness through Christ to sinful men, and the only limit to preaching Christ was that they knew Him for themselves as the Lord and Saviour of men.

In a strict sense, the Apostles, as witnesses of the Saviour's death and resurrection, had no successors. They held a high position of honour as the witnesses of the historic facts of the Christian religion; but the greater number of them soon pass out of sight and are succeeded by those who had never seen the Lord in the flesh, but who, believing in His Name, became His witnesses in all parts of the earth. And as years went on, emphasis was more and more laid on the spiritual knowledge of Christ rather than the historic knowledge of His earthly life: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). The fountains of spiritual life henceforth were fed from the spring of living faith in His eternal power and grace. And this is the secret of all true preaching authority and power to-day; no fancied line of connection with the historic past, but a present and living

fellowship of faith in Christ through the Holy Ghost.

The whole sacerdotal theory, too, is as unscriptural as an official priesthood. Following the priest, comes the Sacrament, which is exalted to a position of undue meaning and importance, being made the very condition of spiritual life.

By the Sacrament of Baptism the child is declared to be made "a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The simple ordinance of the Lord's Supper is turned into a priestly performance scarcely to be distinguished from the Romish mass; and other doctrines and usages of the Romish Church, such as auricular confession, the offering of incense, and prayers for the dead, are now being openly adopted in our National *Protestant* Church; to the openly expressed satisfaction of Cardinal Vaughan, who, in a speech delivered not long before his death, declared there was but little difference to be observed now between the Anglican and Romish Churches, and pleaded for a speedy reunion of the severed tie of 1570.

In the New Testament *Christ* is first and the Sacraments last. Jesus Himself did not baptise. When the mothers of Judæa brought their children to Him, He did not enquire whether they were baptised or not, but "took them up in His arms and blessed them." He had been baptised by John in Jordan, and in the great commission which authorises the Gospel to be preached to every creature, He appointed the simple ordinance of baptism as

an expression of faith, but He never made it the fundamental condition of spiritual life.

It used to be said that the spirits of poor unbaptised children moaned on the pathless air, and were borne restless through space on the wings of the storm, while their poor little bodies were put away in some corner of the churchyard under the sting-nettles.

Robert Hawker, of Morwenstow, Cornwall, in his ballad on baptism, makes the poor unbaptised one to say :—

“ Ah woe is me, for I have no grace
Nor goodness as I ought,
I never shall go to the happy place,
And 'tis all my parents' fault.”

Paul declared he was not sent to baptise, but to preach the Gospel. The entire priestly theory in the light of the New Testament is not a fulfilment, but a destruction of the sublime simplicity and power of the Christian Church as founded by Christ Jesus our Lord, and taught by His apostles and earliest disciples.

III.—THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

The first and final appeal in all matters affecting the Christian religion is the New Testament. We admit no authority either of pope or priest, creed or tradition. “ One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren.” He is “ Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” His last spoken word on earth declares, “ All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make

disciples of all the nations." Our relationship to Christ, whether as individual Christians or collective bodies of believers, is personal and direct, and we can allow no man or man-made theory to come between us and Him. We turn, therefore, from all ecclesiastical tradition and assumption to enquire what is the Church of Christ in His own idea and purpose, what its constitution as He ordained, and what its practice as observed in the inspired records of the New Testament.

We take first of all the term itself. What is the meaning of the word *Church*? It is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is made up of two words, *ek*, out of, or from, and *kaleo*, I call. So that its literal meaning is *called out*; a company called out from others and actually assembling together. The term was originally applied to the religious assemblies of the Jews, and is thus employed by Stephen, who in his address to the Sanhedrim, spoke of "the Church in the wilderness." It was also applied to the assemblies of the people in the republican cities of Ancient Greece. These were composed of the free citizens who were called out by the public crier from the mass of the population, and were distinguished from visitors, aliens and slaves. "The word had thus undergone a most remarkable double preparation for the important part assigned to it in Christian teaching. It was at once Hebrew and classic, conveying distinct yet harmonious shades of meaning to the ears of Jewish and Gentile converts. To the former it suggested

the idea of the Israel of God, the congregation of God's chosen people ; to the latter, of the assembly of freeborn citizens of the Heavenly City, *called out* by the Gospel from the multitudes of slaves of sin—once like them, 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, but now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.'

To us its meaning is clear as the light of day, that all those who hear the call of Christ and respond thereto in personal repentance and faith thereby become partakers in the fellowship of Christ and of all the blessings of Gospel grace. Whatever their name or nationality, they are the members of Christ's Church, called out, separated unto the grace of God ; in the world, yet not of it, and are witnesses of Christ to the world. In its widest range, the Church thus includes all true believers whether on earth or in heaven, and in it to God's clear sight there is neither division nor partition, but all are "baptised by one Spirit and into one body."

"One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

In its more limited aspect, the Church means any assembly of believers in Christ who are gathered together in His Name. As such, it was first applied to believers in Jerusalem ; afterwards, as the Gospel spread, to believers in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and elsewhere. When a country or district is spoken of, we read of the Churches. Take the following Scriptural references : "The Church that is

at Jerusalem." "Even as I teach in every Church." "The Churches of Asia salute you." "I have given orders to the Churches of Galatia." "Paul went through Syria confirming the Churches." We also read of the Church in *the house*. There was a Church in Cæsar's household. Even under the roof of the imperial despot who sought to destroy the Christian religion, a few who had espoused that religion met together in secret worship, and they were a *Church* among themselves. Yes, and down in the rock-hewn caves and corridors of the Catacombs whither they fled for shelter and safety amid the terrible persecutions of the early centuries, the followers of the Crucified One strengthened each other to endure and suffer. They have left the memorials of their faith and hope and love in pictures and writings on the walls, which may be seen to this day. And we speak of them as the Church in the Catacombs.

Dr Fairbairn, in his masterly treatise, "Christ in Modern Theology," writes: "The local Churches were essentially societies of the enfranchised or saved. Paul addressed his Epistles, so far as they were not directly personal, to the collective body or Church. The ministers are only once specified, and not as intermediaries, or a necessity to the being of a Church. The very purpose of his Epistles is to instruct free and autonomous societies. Each body is a unit, but its unity is not secured by any office; it is rather because it is a body that it has many members with various ministries. The lists of these are significant;

they represent preaching, teaching and various benefices, but nothing sacerdotal, no sanctity peculiar to the office. Each Church was a brotherhood, for all were sons of God, yet each was a legislative and judicial body. And in these respects the Church is in Acts what it is in the Pauline Epistles. The election of Matthias to the place of Judas was by the brethren. The seven deacons were chosen by the whole multitude. It was the Church in Jerusalem which sent Barnabas to Antioch. The Church was thus 'The multitude who believed.' The most gracious sanctities, the severest authorities, the highest dignities belonged to the Church, not through any official priesthood—for there was none—but through the personal relation to Christ of the men who formed it, and His presence in their midst."

So to-day, any body of believers in Christ, meeting anywhere, under any sky, in His name, may claim to be a Church, distinct in itself, yet recognising that it is only a part of the one Universal Church of which Christ is the only and Supreme Head.

The Charter of the Church as declared by our Lord is recorded in Matthew xviii. 15-20. As to its assembly, He assigns no limit in number and no preference as to place. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

As to its freedom of access to God, He gives the practically unlimited promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of

My Father which is in heaven." As to administrative power, He links it to Himself in the wondrous words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." As to the mutual obligation of forgiveness, the decision of the Church is final. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as a heathen." What can equal the beautiful simplicity of this divinely-ordered constitution?

"Oh, how unlike the works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan."

Where is the ground for sacerdotal pretension and ceremonial show? These things are the after-growth of degenerate ages, the accretions of human pride and vanity.

In the light of Christ's teaching, we reject the claim of any body of men to set themselves up as *the Church*, to the exclusion of all others. This is done by the Episcopal Church of this country, which designates itself *The Church of England*. It is an unwarrantable presumption. We might as truly call Nonconformity the Church of Wales, or Methodism the Church of Cornwall, as term Episcopacy the Church of

England. Nay! as far as it is true to Christ, it is *one*, but *only one*, among the many Churches of the living God that are included in the Great Universal Church that owns Christ as its Head and Lord. The Apostles' Creed declares, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." So do we, but not limiting it, as we fear it is too often limited in the minds of those who utter it, to their own particular fold, but extending it to every sincere believer, whether in earth or heaven. "The Church is Catholic because it includes all real Christians, and holy because it includes none else. It is composed of all that in every place are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.' The presence or absence of this Church depends not on anything ceremonial or outward, but on the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise—'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Where Christ is, by the faith of His people, by the rule of His word, and by the presence of His Spirit, there is the Church. Where Christ is not, where faith, truth and the Holy Spirit are absent, there the Church is not. There may be the gleam of mitres, the pomp of vestments, the administration of sacraments, the pealing harmony of antiphonal chant, and the Church may not be there. There may be a handful of poor men and women met in a cottage, without either minister or Sacrament, to read the Word of God and to join their prayers before His throne; and there, in that humble circle of believing and loving hearts, may be the Master's promised

presence. If so, there is a portion of the true Church of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”¹

The doctrine of regeneration in the New Testament is that of a new nature begotten by the Holy Spirit on condition of a personal repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is its absolute condition of membership, which is only maintained by continuance of faith and holy living. Happily, there are many evangelical clergymen who take their theology from the Scriptures rather than their professed creeds, and who preach faithfully the doctrines of grace, but we fear there is an increasing number who substitute ritualistic observance for saving faith. Then, in point of *government*, the primitive Church governed itself. It knew neither State government nor State pay. The highest officers it had were its own pastors and teachers, and they were supported by the voluntary contributions of its members. Its bishops were simply *overseers*. That is what the word *bishop* means; one who takes oversight of the Church.

The members of the Apostolic Church enjoyed no worldly profit or honour, no political privilege or government patronage, but frequently were denied the common rights of citizens and had to suffer the loss of all things. The one aim of their life was to extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom by seeking the salvation of men; and the one legacy they have left behind is the example of unfaltering fidelity to Christ, even at the cost of life itself.

¹ Dr Conder.

IV.—VOLUNTARYISM *versus* STATE SUPPORT.

We are Nonconformists, further, because we believe that the Church of Christ should be supported on the voluntary principle and not by coercion. This is the Scriptural method. “The Lord hath ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” The ministry of the Word was to be maintained by the freewill offerings of those who shared its blessings. The standard of support is laid down by Christ Himself: “Freely ye have received, freely give.” St Paul directs (1 Cor. xvi. 2) that on the first day of the week every one was to lay by him in store for the service of God, as God had prospered him. He commended the Macedonian churches because that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy corresponded to the riches of their liberality. “They first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.” In its fresh outburst of love, the Apostolic Church carried the principle of voluntaryism so far that it became a concrete illustration of what is now termed Christian Socialism; for, “all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need.”

If the Episcopal Church is so anxious to claim for itself apostolic example and authority, let it return to apostolic simplicity, equality, and liberality. But as it is now constituted, in a great measure it lives on the taxes and revenues of the State, on tithes, and (in a few instances) rates, grudgingly wrung from the purses of the

rich, ill-spared from the hard earnings of the poor, and forced by the strong arm of the State alike from the infidel and the ungodly, and from those who conscientiously protest against such payments.

It is as unjust as it is unscriptural ; unjust to the multitudes of persons, members of the Free Churches of this land, who, while sustaining the Churches to which they adhere, are compelled, at the same time, to support a Church whose portals they never enter and in whose teaching they do not believe.

The principle of State pay for the maintenance of religion we should alike condemn, were the endowed Church Congregational or Methodist. Did the State propose to endow the Bible Christian Denomination to-morrow with £10,000 a year, we would say No ! a thousand times No. Perish the emoluments ! Let us have our freedom still ; freedom to worship God according to the dictates of an untrammelled conscience ; freedom to do His will as the Holy Ghost may direct ; and freedom to give as God gives us the means and the power to do. We can only touch here the fringe of the question of tithes, but if the tithe-charge remain, as in all probability it would, if the Church were disestablished to-morrow, then let it be appropriated, not to the exclusive benefit of one particular sect, much less to a tyrannical and oppressive landlordism, but to the well-being of the people at large. Let what is national property be fairly shared by all, and not by a privileged portion of the community. Much has already been done, and not least by the

Free Churches of the country, for the education and for the social and spiritual improvement of the people, but there is still a grinding poverty, a wide-spread destitution, that is a disgrace to our twentieth-century civilisation ; and many other ills exist that call for national treatment and relief.

But meanwhile, tithe or no tithe, we accept and assert the principle authorised by Christ and His Apostles, and embodied in the practice of the New Testament days, that the Christian Church must stand in the loyalty and love of its adherents, and only so long as it receives that loyalty and love does it deserve to stand. Even proverbial wisdom has decreed that "every tub must stand on its own bottom."

But, we are asked, "What would become of religion if the State support were withdrawn ?" We reply that religion could well take care of itself before it had any State support, and that it can do so still is amply proved by the vigorous life of the Nonconformist Churches to-day. The purest days of Christianity were its earliest days, when it was a State-persecuted religion. The breakdown came when it substituted the arm of flesh for the presence of the Spirit, the wisdom of men for the power of God. From the time of Constantine until now, the system of State pay, patronage, and power has been a source of evil. It has caused the Christian ministry to be looked on as a gentlemanly profession instead of an awfully sacred and responsible work ; it has severed the kindly and honourable link which the law of Christ instituted between pastor and people and substituted the iron link

of legal enactment. We greatly rejoice in the fact that many of the most able and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ are found within the Established Church, but they are there not in virtue of the system of State support, but in spite of it. Those who enter its ministry from pure motives, would do so still, though there were no rich benefices or State honours and emoluments to tempt them. Even for the Church itself, there is no greater blessing in store, as the case of Ireland conclusively proves, than the severance of its unholy alliance with the State. That which is pure will become purer still, and the bad will be purged away.

The great source of the inequalities that now prevail is the connection of the Church with the State, and only when that connection is severed will our Christian sanctuaries be regarded with a common sacredness, and Christian ministers be recognised as having an equal right to preach the Gospel of Christ. Equality of talent we shall never have, for men are alike in their heels but not in their heads. But equality of principle, of position as ministers of the grace of God, is a just and righteous demand. At present, our authority to preach is denied, our places of worship are termed unhallowed conventicles, and even in the quiet stillness of the place so beautifully termed "God's Acre," priestly superiority sits gaunt and ghastly upon the tombstones of the dead. Two separate buildings for the last solemn service embody in stone the miserable division, and even in the bosom of the earth the poor Dissenter must lie separate from the consecrated soil lest he carry contamination in his bones.

It is sad beyond expression, and never sadder than when regarded in the light of our Saviour's prayer :—“That they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

The divisions of Christendom are in part the ground and pleading of the world's unbelief ; nor can we see how these divisions can be healed until the barriers that make them possible are removed out of the way.

We speak in no strifeful spirit. That is foreign to our nature. But honestly and fearlessly we state our position and the principles that justify it. We join hands with all those who in every place call the Redeemer Blessed ! We breathe the apostolic prayer, “Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” We eagerly long and look for the day when the very names that divide us shall be forgotten, “and the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest”; at rest from internal feud as from external foe.

The organic re-union of Protestant Christendom may be an event yet far distant, but every sign of the times points to its hastening. The light is spreading. “The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.” The hand of time's old clock is moving on. Years ago it pointed to *persecution*. Men were destitute, afflicted, tormented. Since then it has been pointing to *toleration*. We are allowed to live and breathe. And there are some who see it moving and pointing to *perfect religious equality*. Some of the great lands across the seas have

heard striking the hour of noon. Rev. W. J. Dawson, after his return from the American Methodist Ecumenical Conference, wrote : " The absence of a State Church here is at once recognised in the religious equality that prevails. There is no exclusive cult, no caste, no differentiation of the people into sheep and goats according to ecclesiastical tests. The President of the United States addressed the Conference in a speech of great beauty and power. Happy is the people so governed."

Meanwhile, till such happy conditions of freedom and brotherhood are realised in England, let us, as Nonconformists, in every movement towards freedom, seek to be moved and controlled by supreme love to God and men.

" Let us seek to maintain that unbroken living fellowship with God, which we believe to be the privilege of every believer in Christ, and let us prove in our own life and experience that the true succession in the Church of Christ is not that of priest or prelate, but that of godly men and women who live and die in the faith of Christ. That is a succession which never has been broken and never can be. It reaches right on from the first man who walked on this earth with God, to the last man who shall make his way home to the Infinite Love. It goes back through all the centuries of time, and forward it shall go, still and for ever unbroken, till the sublime purpose of God is complete, and Christ with His great heart shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."

BX Hancock, Arthur.

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